













# ADELE DORING AT BOARDING-SCHOOL







"OH, GIRLS, I JUST KNOW WE ARE GOING TO HAVE THE BEST TIMES EVER."—*Page 69.*

# ADELE DORING AT BOARDING-SCHOOL

By

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and "Adele Doring on a Ranch"*

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BOSTON  
**LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.**

PZ 7  
N 812  
Aa

Published, September, 1921

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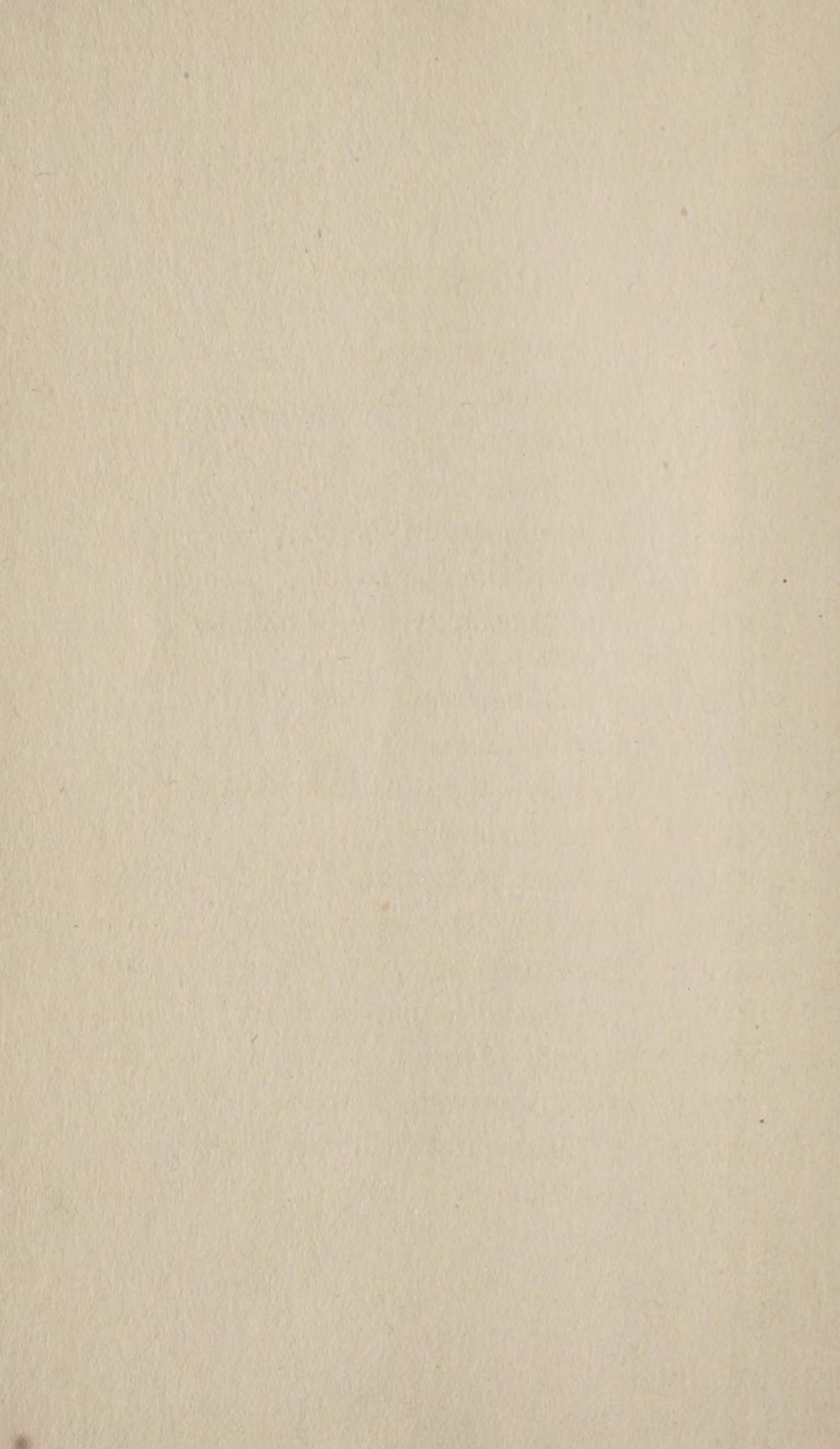
Adele Doring at Boarding-School

Norwood Press  
BERWICK & SMITH CO.  
NORWOOD, MASS.  
U. S. A.

SEP -8 1921

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*Dedicated to the many girls in the  
“Sunnyside Club of California,”  
who have so often written the  
author telling her how dearly they  
love Adele Doring, and how they  
do wish that they could be like her*



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# Adele Doring at Boarding-School

## CHAPTER ONE

### A NEW SUNNYSIDER

“Hark to the carol of the old school bell,  
Hark to the message that it has to tell;  
Ring it, sing it far and near,  
Vacation is over and school days are here.”

ADELE DORING sang merrily as she stood in front of the library mirror placing her rose-colored tam-o'-shanter jauntily on the nut-brown locks that curled about her pretty face in soft ringlets.

“Are you glad that vacation is over, little daughter?” Mrs. Doring asked as she came in from the garden with a big bowl of yellow chrysanthemums, which she placed on the magazine-strewn table.

"Oh, Mumsie!" Adele exclaimed as she whirled about with shining eyes. "I seem to be always delighted over each new thing that happens. Last summer I was so glad to go with brother Jack to the desert and I had such a beautiful time with Eva and Amanda on their Uncle Dick's interesting cattle ranch, and then how glad I was to come home again to my Adorable Mother and my Giant Daddy. I have had a wonderful vacation, and now, I am just ever so eager to go back to school, and, think of it, Mumsie, I am in the eighth grade this term, and next year I shall be going to Dorchester High with my big brother Jack."

While Adele was chattering, she slipped on her rose-colored sweater coat, and then, gathering up her books, she gave her mother a light kiss on the forehead and danced away.

It was hard for her to keep from hippety-hopping down the village street, but she reminded herself that she was fourteen now and almost a young lady, but, when she

reached the short cut across the meadows, she skipped in little-girl fashion, waving her free hand in greeting to a bird which darted out of the grass and skyward with a joyous song.

Hearing her name called, she turned and waited for Rosamond Wright, who came up quite breathless from running.

"Good-morning, Rosie. Are you glad vacation is over?" Adele inquired.

The maiden addressed shook her head, which set her short yellow curls to bobbing. "No, not really glad," she replied. "You know that I would much rather play than study. Look, Della, there are the girls waiting for us at the crossing. Carol Lorens, a new pupil, is with them. Have you met her yet?"

"No, I haven't," Adele replied, "but Gertrude Willis tells me that she is ever so nice and that we shall be glad to have her join the Sunnyside Club." Then, waving a hand to the waiting group, Della called, "Top o' the morning to you!"

There was a merry chorus of greetings in response, and the irrepressible Betty Burd darted forward and taking Adele's hand, she sang out, "Miss Carol Lorens, permit me to introduce you to everybody's favorite, Adele Doring."

"Oh, Bettykins!" Della exclaimed reprovingly. Then, turning to the slender, pleasant-faced girl, who had recently come to Sunnyside, she held out her hand saying sincerely, "Miss Lorens, we are ever so glad to welcome you to our town and to our school."

"Thank you," Carol replied. "I know that I shall just love it here. However, I am not sure that I am to be in your school. We have but recently moved from the Middle West. I had finished the eighth grade there and was ready for high, but since there is no high school in Sunnyside, Father thought I would better report here this morning and ask the advice of the principal. You see, I am a year older than you girls, for I am fifteen."

"I wish that you might attend our school," Adele said as they entered the yard. "We do have such merry times, but," she added brightly, "even if you have to attend the Dorchester High, you can be with us on Saturdays."

The last bell was ringing and so they trooped into the building, promising to meet under the elm-tree as soon as they had been assigned to their classes. The real work of the school was not to begin until the following day.

An hour later they were again together. "Well, Carol, what did Mr. Dickerson decide?" Adele inquired. "You look almost sad about something."

"I am indeed sorry that I cannot be in the class with the rest of you," the older girl replied, "but Mr. Dickerson says that my report shows that I have been over the work of the eighth grade thoroughly and that I ought to attend the Dorchester High."

"We are sorry, too," Adele said, "but we

shall see you often, Carol, as we want you to join our Sunnyside Club."

"I shall be glad to," the newcomer replied, happily, "and thank you for inviting me."

Then they parted, going in different directions. Carol's thoughts were happy ones as she tripped along through the village and out on the Lake Road.

She smiled to herself as she thought of the merry group of girls she had just left. Carol had dreaded coming to this strange place, fearing that she would be very lonely, but now she was to be made a member of the Sunnyside Club, and she knew that she would love every one of the girls.

Then her thoughts went back over all that had happened in the past month. There had been the beautiful home in a suburb of Chicago, for her father had been a prosperous lawyer, then, for reasons which she never understood, there had been a heavy financial loss, everything they possessed had been sold, and they had moved to the farmhouse

which had been her father's boyhood home, on the Lake Road just out of the town of Sunnyside.

She liked to think of her father as a bare-foot boy swinging on the gate which she was then approaching. From the very first day she had felt at home in the comfortable brown house which stood in the midst of a rambling apple orchard. The gnarled old trees were a source of endless delight to her seven-year-old brother and sister, David and Dorothy.

As Carol opened the gate, she heard merry, chattering noises which she knew were made by the twins, who, hidden in the branches, were pretending that they were birds.

As she walked up the gravelly path, the youngsters slid down a near-by apple-tree and pounced upon her.

"You promised to play with us when you came home from school," David cried, "and I want to choose the game," he hurried to add.

"Why, David Lorens!" his twin sister cried indignantly. "You know it isn't your turn to choose a game. You chose yesterday and so it is my turn."

"Tut! Tut! Children!" Carol laughingly admonished. "Climb up in the tree again and be happy little birds until I come out, and then we three will do something ever so interesting."

Carol little dreamed that the something that they were to do would make a wonderful change in her life.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE OGRE

DANCING into the sunny living-room, Carol called, "Mother mine, we have a problem to solve. Can you guess what it is?"

Mrs. Lorens glanced up from the blue patch that she was sewing on a small pair of overalls as she replied, "Yes, dear, I can guess. The principal of the Sunnyside school thinks that you are too advanced to take the work of the eighth grade again."

"Why, Mother dear, are you a mind-reader?" Carol asked as she sat on a stool near by. "That is just what happened, and in one way I am ever so sorry. Of course I am eager to get through high as soon as possible, so that I may help Daddy 'recuperate his fallen fortunes,' as he calls it, but I am really disappointed not to be able to at-

tend this school, for I met seven of the loveliest girls, and they asked me to join their Sunnyside Club. Mother dear, what am I to do? It will cost quite a little to send me to the city of Dorchester every day, and that is the nearest high school."

Mrs. Lorens smiled lovingly at her daughter. "The right way always opens for us, dear," she said. "Just now I am not sure what it is, but this evening your father and I will talk it over," then she added with a little sigh, "I had so hoped, Carol, that you might go to boarding-school this year to study music and drawing, for which I am sure that you have natural talent, but, because of our changed circumstances, I fear that it cannot be. That is why your brother Peter gave up going to college this term. He will continue his law studies with your father and assist him in the office, but, if we all economize, and go without something this winter, you may be able to go away to school by another fall."

Carol sprang up and kissed her mother

impulsively. “*You go without, Mummie?*” she exclaimed indignantly. “Well, I just guess not! If Peter and I need more ‘iddication,’ as Pat used to call it, then we’ll earn the money ourselves.”

The mother smiled into the earnest brown eyes. She had so wanted Carol and Peter to have the advantages of higher education, but how proud she was of them for bearing their disappointment so bravely.

“Mummie,” Carol was saying, “the twins are waiting for me without. Have you an errand that we can do for you?”

“Yes, dear,” the mother replied. “Your father left a bundle of legal papers on the desk in his study and you are to take them to Mr. Dartmoor’s, and your father told me to tell you to give them to the old gentleman himself, as they are *very* important.”

“Then it shall be done!” Carol replied brightly, kissing her mother and skipping away.

A moment later she appeared on the front path.

"Dorothy! David!" she called. "Where are you?" and then, as the two scrambled down from a tree, she explained, "I have an errand to do for Father, and, if you wish to go with me, I'll run you a race."

"I'll beat you both!" David cried lustily when they were out on the highway, which led toward Little Bear Lake.

"Not while your twin Dorothy has such long spider-legs," Carol laughingly replied, and then, away they ran down the country road which was bordered with goldenrod and purple asters. As Carol had prophesied, Dorothy easily won the race, then, being quite out of breath, they continued their way at a slower pace.

Half a mile beyond, they could see what appeared to be a dense wood, but which, in reality, was a beautiful estate, where, in the midst of fine old trees, stood the castle-like home of their father's richest client, Mr. Dartmoor.

Soon Carol and the two children passed under an imposing archway, and walked

along the circling drive. On either side of wide stone steps, lions crouched, as though about to spring upon the unwelcome visitor.

"You tiny tads stay here," Carol said softly, "while I go inside and call upon the ogre."

"Oh Carol," Dorothy whispered, her eyes wide with sudden fear, "is Mr. Dartmoor *really* an ogre?"

"No, of course not!" the big sister laughingly replied. "I've never seen him, but I'll tell you all about him when I come out."

Then Carol went up the steps and lifted the heavy iron knocker and smiled reassuringly down at the children, who stood watching her, almost fearfully, at the foot of the stone steps.

"Skip over and look at the fountain," she called softly, and then turned, for the door was opening.

A serving-man in blue-and-gold livery admitted her in to a dimly-lighted, softly-carpeted hall. Having stated her errand, Carol sat on the edge of a chair holding fast

to her bundle of important papers, and waited the appearance of the old gentleman who Peter had told her looked like an ogre.

"How solemn and quiet everything is," she thought as she glanced about, "but of course there is nothing to be afraid of."

Just then she heard a cane knocking across the floor in an adjoining room, the velvet portières parted and Mr. Dartmoor himself stood before her.

"How do you do, little lady?" he said, and his voice did not sound at all like an ogre's.

Carol slipped from the chair and half curtsied. "I'm very well, sir, thank you," she replied. "I am Carol Lorens, and my father asked me to give you this bundle of legal papers."

"So you are Mr. Lorens' little girl? You are about fourteen, are you not?" the old gentleman asked kindly.

"I am fifteen," Carol replied less timidly.

"I have a granddaughter who is the same

age," Mr. Dartmoor said as he held back a portière. "Yonder is her portrait."

"Oh, how lovely she must be!" Carol exclaimed as she stepped inside the room and gazed admiringly at the life-sized painting which hung over the mantel. A beautiful young girl looked out at them and a shaggy collie stood at her side.

"Does your granddaughter live here with you?" Carol asked.

The old gentleman shook his head sadly. "No," he replied. "Evelyn's parents are dead and I have placed her in a good boarding-school, but she is very, very lonely. Her mother left her only a few weeks ago."

"Poor Evelyn!" Carol said and there were tears in her eyes. "I did so want to go to boarding-school myself, but I would far rather have my mother."

Mr. Dartmoor went to the door with Carol and the twins raced from the fountain to meet her. They went shyly up the wide stone steps when the old gentleman called to them. True, he had shaggy grey eye-

brows but the blue eyes underneath them were twinkling.

When the children were again on the highway, David exclaimed, "I don't believe that Mr. Dartmoor is an ogre at all. He looks so kind and jolly. I think he is Santa Claus."

"Maybe so!" Carol laughingly replied, and then she told the twins about the old gentleman's beautiful granddaughter Evelyn, who was in a boarding-school near Buffalo.

Suddenly Dorothy asked, "Carol, don't you feel awfully sorry 'cause you can't go away to boarding-school like you expected to?"

Carol smiled down at the pretty upturned face of her little sister as she replied, "Yes, dear, I am very sorry."

"Then why don't you cry?" asked David. "Dorothy always cries when she can't have what she wants."

"I *don't* always, so now!" exclaimed his small twin, stamping her foot and flashing

her eyes. "You cried yourself when your stupid old balloon burst."

"Do you want to know why I don't cry?" Carol asked quickly, to quiet the impending storm. "Well, it's because our mother tells us that every cloud has a silver lining and I make believe that not going to boarding-school is a big, black cloud, and I'm trying to think what its silver lining would be. Saving the money and making things easier for Mummie, I suppose."

Just then a squirrel darted across the path and the twins gave merry chase, while Carol, left alone, walked along slowly, thinking of the lovely orphan girl who had everything the world could give except a mother. Tears rushed to her eyes as she tried to picture what life would be without her own dearest "mummie."

When the house was reached Carol went directly to the living-room and throwing her arms about her mother, she clung to her as though she would never let her go again.

"What is it, darling?" Mrs. Lorens

asked as she pressed her cheek against the tear-wet face of her daughter.

Then Carol told all about Evelyn. "Oh Mummie, Mummie," she implored, "promise that you will never, never leave us."

"Tut, tut, daughter of mine!" her mother replied brightly. "As Grandpa Lorens used to say, 'Don't let's worry about a thing until it has happened, and even then, worrying doesn't help any.' Hark! The clock is striking five and supper not begun. Call Dorothy and David, and tell them that it is time to set the table."

Carol obeyed and she laughed and chattered with the twins while they all helped their mother prepare the evening meal, but, in spite of her assumed cheerfulness, she could not forget poor lonely Evelyn Dartmoor. How she hoped that some day she would meet her.

Surprising things happen, and before that week was over, Carol had met Evelyn in a way that brought great happiness into both of their lives.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TWO SURPRISES

MEANWHILE Mr. Dartmoor had returned to his study thinking of the three children who had just departed. "A merry brood!" he said aloud, but his smile faded when he looked at the painting of his granddaughter. "Poor Evelyn!" he thought, "I wish that I knew how to make you happy."

Then sitting at his desk, he picked up his morning mail and found on top a letter from his granddaughter.

Opening it, he read,

"DEAREST GRANDDAD:

"I am so lonely, so lonely! Won't you please let me come back to you? There is no one here who can understand. I watch the girls laughing and playing games, but I do not think that I shall ever be able to join them again. I would not mind so much if only they would leave me alone, but Madame

Deriby insists that I have a roommate, and there is no one I want to have room with me. Oh, Granddad! What shall I do? Must I stay?

“Your unhappy granddaughter,  
“EVELYN.”

“My poor little lassie!” Mr. Dartmoor said as he sat with the letter open in his hand and looked up at the painting. “But Madame Deriby is right! Evelyn *should* have a companion, some one bright and cheery, yet, some one who could understand.”

At that very moment Mr. Dartmoor saw, in his memory, Carol’s sweet face, and the tears brimming her eyes, as she said, “I did *so* want to go to boarding-school myself, but I would far rather have my mother.”

“The very thing!” exclaimed Mr. Dartmoor aloud as he rang a bell and ordered his carriage. Soon he was being driven down the country road toward the brown house on the edge of the village.

David upon hearing the wheels in the drive ran to a front room window where he

could get a better view. Dorothy skipped to join him and then she called excitedly, "Carol, look quick! Here is your ogre coming to pay you a visit."

"He isn't an ogre, so now!" David protested. "He's Santa Claus!" Just at that moment Mr. Lorens entered the dining-room. "What are the twins so excited about?" he inquired.

"They say that Mr. Dartmoor is coming up the drive," Carol replied.

"You delivered the papers, did you not, daughter?" her father asked anxiously.

"Yes, Dad, I gave them to Mr. Dartmoor himself."

Just then the bell rang, and Mr. Lorens, hoping that nothing had been wrong with the legal document which he had prepared with great care, went to open the door.

When greetings had been exchanged, Mr. Dartmoor asked if he might speak for one moment with Mr. and Mrs. Lorens.

Wondering what the conference was to be about, Mr. Lorens called his wife, and to-

gether they went into a small room which Peter had named his "Den."

Carol, like the good little housekeeper that she was, finished cooking the supper and placed it in the warming-oven to wait the reappearance of her parents.

The twins, in the outer hall, watched the closed door curiously and tried to guess what their Santa Claus was talking about.

At last, to their great relief, the door opened and their mother beckoned to them. David darted in ahead of the others, but no one reproved his forgotten manners, instead, their parents were smiling as though some great good fortune had befallen them.

"Carol," Mrs. Lorens exclaimed, taking her daughter's hand, "what do you suppose that Mr. Dartmoor has been telling us?"

"Something nice, I am sure," that girl replied, "for you and Dad look so happy."

"I hope that you will think that it is nice," the old gentleman said kindly. "Carol, I want you to go to Linden Hall Seminary to be a roommate and companion

for my granddaughter Evelyn. Will you go?"

"Oh, Mr. Dartmoor!" the girl exclaimed joyfully. "How I would love to go if Mother could spare me, but who would help her around the house?"

"I would!" cried little Dorothy clapping her hands. "Mother said that I might be her helper some day, and *this* is some day, isn't it, Mummie?"

Mrs. Lorens smiled brightly. It was hard for her to speak, her heart was so full. The advantages which she had so wished her daughter to have were to come in a beautiful way, for Carol was to give much in exchange.

"Then it is all settled, and I am truly grateful to your father and mother for permitting you to go. It will mean more than I can tell you to my lonely granddaughter."

Then, before the girl could express the gratitude and joy which she felt, Mr. Dartmoor was gone.

The next afternoon when the Sunny Seven trooped out of their school, they found Carol

Lorens waiting for them under the elm-tree.

Her eyes were glowing like two stars and Adele, catching her hand, said:

"Why, Carol, what good news have you to tell us? Have you found out where you are to go to school?"

Carol nodded. "That's why I came today," she said, "because I can't be here tomorrow to attend the meeting of the Sunnyside Club."

Betty Burd clapped her hands gleefully as she cried, "Oh, I can guess where you are going. To a girls' boarding-school somewhere."

"Right you are!" Carol replied, looking brightly around at the eager group, and then she told them all the wonderful things that had happened since she had last seen them.

"You will love Evelyn Dartmoor!" Doris Drexel exclaimed. "I met her when she and her mother spent a few days here last spring."

"Oh, I just know that I shall love her!"

Carol replied, and then she added impulsively, "Girls, you have all been so good to me! You can't guess what it means to a stranger to be treated so kindly. I expected to be lonely and left out and you have been just like old friends. How I do wish that you were going to boarding-school with me."

"Queer things happen!" Adele replied.  
"Maybe your wish will come true."

Adele spoke jokingly, for little did she dream that queer things were to happen, and soon.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NEW FACES AND NEW PLACES

CAROL awoke bright and early the next morning and her first thought was that something wonderful was about to happen. Then she remembered that she was going away to boarding-school. Springing up, she began to dress.

“Just think,” she said to her reflection in the mirror, “this is the last time that you will look out of this glass in ever and ever so long.” Then she added after a thoughtful moment, “Carol Lorens, you don’t seem very happy. Aren’t you glad that you are going?”

“Good-morning, darling!” a sweet voice called from the doorway and whirling around, Carol nestled in her mother’s arms as she exclaimed, “Oh, Mummie, Mummie!

I don't believe that I want to go and leave you after all."

"Of course we will both be lonely, daughter dear," her mother said brightly, "but you are not going far away and I want you to bring Evelyn home to us for at least part of the holidays. Moreover I shall expect long, newsy letters from my big girl telling me that she is making the most of the wonderful advantages that have been given her. Now, dear, make haste! The train leaves at nine and Father and Peter are waiting to have breakfast with you."

Then followed a very exciting half-hour. There was much laughter and bantering, and a few tears that would come. Peter gave Carol many a nonsensical piece of advice, for had he not been away to college?

Later, the father, alone with her for one moment, took both of her hands in his as he said, "Daughter, when a problem confronts you, ask yourself, 'What would my mother do?' and then do likewise."

He held her close in his strong arms, and

then walked rapidly away to join Peter who was waiting at the gate.

The baggage men arrived to take her trunk, and then, before she had time to turn around, there arose a joyous shouting out on the lawn. "Carol! Carol!" the twins were calling. "Here comes Mr. Dartmoor's carriage. It's time for you to go."

Carol wondered afterwards how she had managed to say good-bye to her mother and the twins without crying, but little mother had been so brave and smiling that she had smiled too, and then, as they drove away, the courtly Mr. Dartmoor began talking of Evelyn and before long they had reached the station and there were the members of the Sunnyside Club gathered to bid her good-bye.

Carol had just time to introduce them to the old gentleman, when the train came puffing around the curve.

"Do write to us the very first moment that you have to spare," Adele called. "You just can't guess how we are all envying you

because you are going away to boarding-school."

"I promise!" Carol replied and she smilingly waved through an open window as long as she could see her friends.

The two hours to Buffalo passed quickly and then there was another hour on a noisy little local train, but Carol was so interested in all she saw that the time passed quickly, and it hardly seemed possible that they could have reached the end of their journey when she heard the brakeman call, "Linden!"

Her heart beat rapidly. In another moment she would see the beautiful Evelyn. How she did hope that they were to be good friends.

They two were the only passengers to alight at the station of Linden, and at once Carol saw a tall, slender girl in black, who came hurrying forward. With a little cry of joy, she threw her arms about Mr. Dartmoor's neck, and for a moment neither spoke.

"Oh, Granddad!" Evelyn said at last.  
"How lonely, lonely I have been since I saw  
you!"

"Well, we're here now," Mr. Dartmoor ex-  
claimed brightly, "and this is my little  
friend Carol Lorens."

Evelyn held out her hand to the other  
girl as she said, "I am so glad that you  
have come. Having a friend of Granddad's  
here will be almost like having Granddad  
himself."

"I am glad, too," Carol replied simply.  
On the train Mr. Dartmoor had asked her  
not to tell Evelyn at present how she hap-  
pened to come to Linden.

The school bus was waiting, and Mr.  
Dartmoor gallantly helped the girls in and  
sat opposite them. Then to entertain them  
on the drive, he told them that Carol's  
grandfather and he had been "pals" when  
they were boys.

"Then it is but natural that you and I  
should be friends," Evelyn declared.

Suddenly Carol gave an exclamation of

pleasure. They had been slowly climbing a hill road, and below them was the scattered village of Linden and wide meadows that stretched to the lake. Soon they were turning into an elm-shaded driveway. On either side were well-kept lawns and gardens aglow with autumn flowers.

Set far back among sheltering trees was a rambling building, which in the front looked like a pillared colonial mansion.

"This is Linden Hall!" Evelyn said brightly. "Isn't it a beautiful place?" Mr. Dartmoor noted with a glad heart that already his granddaughter looked happier.

"Oh!" Carol exclaimed, clasping her hands. "I could learn anything here, I am sure. Even Chinese if I had to!"

"Luckily we do not have to," Evelyn responded almost merrily. "I am sure that I could not learn foreign languages if the school were in the Garden of Eden."

For several moments they rode beneath a canopy formed by the interlacing branches of the great old elms. At last the bus

stopped under a covered archway at the front of the house.

Carol felt awed as she followed Evelyn up the stone steps and through the door, which she knew would be for her the portal to many new and wonderful experiences.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A LETTER FROM CAROL

THREE days after the departure of Carol Lorens for Linden, Adele Doring received a letter bearing that postmark.

"O goodie!" she cried, in little-girl fashion. "Thank you, Mr. Drakely. I have been ever so eager to receive this letter."

The postman smiled down at her and was surprised to see her thrust the envelope, unopened, into the pocket of her rose-colored sweater coat.

"Why, Adele, aren't you going to read it?" the mail-carrier, who had known her from babyhood, asked. "I thought you were so anxious to get it."

"I suppose it does look queer," Adele laughingly replied, "but I'm on my way to school, you see, and I don't want to read it until we girls are all together. It's for them as much as it is for me."

Then away she skipped, and, as usual, she found the Sunny Six waiting for her under the elm-tree.

"It's come!" she cried, joyfully waving the letter over her head.

"Oh, good! Is it a letter from Carol Lorens?" Betty Burd inquired.

"I'm glad that we are all early," Doris Drexel declared. "Let's sit down on the bench while Adele reads it to us."

The envelope was torn open and Adele began:

"DEAR SUNNYSIDERS: I am having the most wonderful experiences one right after another, and how I do wish that you were here to share them with me. I'm going to keep a-wishing and A-WISHING until you do come; so you might as well begin to pack your satchels.

"This is the most beautiful old house, with wings added for dormitories when it became a school. There is a glorious view from every window, but I am not going to tell you about that. I am so very sure that you will all see it with your own eyes some day soon.

"Well, to begin at the beginning, when we arrived, Evelyn took me to the office of the

nicest woman—next to Mother—whom I have ever met. Madame Deriby is tall and stately with soft, silvery hair, a beautiful face and the kindest, gentlest manner imaginable. I knew at once that I was going to adore her, and oh, girls, Evelyn is so nice, I am sure that you will all love her.

“The room that we are to have together is the prettiest. It is decorated in yellow and looks as though it were flooded with sunlight, even when it is cloudy. There are two small beds and Evelyn has her things on one side of the room and I have mine on the other.

“I haven’t met any of the other pupils as yet, but there are forty of all ages, Evelyn tells me.

“The ‘get-ready-for-dinner’ bell has just rung, so I will say good-bye for now. I’ll write to you often, but oh, girls, do beg and beseech your nice mothers to let you come to Linden Hall boarding-school soon.

“Your newest Sunnysider,  
“CAROL LORENS.”

“How I do wish that we could go!” Doris Drexel sighed. “It must be a wonderful place, so high on a hill.”

“I couldn’t go if the rest of you did,” Betty Burd declared, “and I’d be so lonely with all of you away.”

Adele slipped an arm about the little girl as she said merrily, "But Bettykins, we aren't any of us going. Mother wishes me to finish out this term with Miss Donovan. There's the last bell. Forward! March!"

Little did the girls dream of the unexpected news that they were about to hear.

When they entered the schoolhouse, they were surprised to find the door of the eighth grade closed and locked. On it a note was pinned, which Adele wonderingly read aloud:

*"Pupils of 8A please report at Mr. Dickerson's office."*

The girls looked at each other in amazement. Surely something must have happened to their beloved Miss Donovan. They found the principal in his office looking very grave. He smiled when he saw their solemn, almost frightened faces.

"Young ladies," he said, "it is not so dreadful as all that, though I must confess I am very much troubled to know just what I ought to do."

Then he explained that Miss Donovan had been called to her home in a neighboring town and that she had wired back that her elderly mother needed her care, and therefore would be unable to return that term.

The girls were truly grieved to hear this, and impulsive Betty Burd exclaimed, "Why, Mr. Dickerson, how *can* we get on without Miss Donovan?"

"We will not decide yet," the principal said kindly. "I have sent to the city to see if another competent eighth-grade teacher can be procured, but it is late, and the classes everywhere are started. However, it is possible that one may be found. Report here to-morrow morning and I shall then be able to tell you what we will do."

The next morning at nine the girls were again waiting in Mr. Dickerson's office, and a few moments later he appeared.

"Well, young ladies," he said, "I have been unsuccessful, and so the Board has suggested that you go to Dorchester to finish this term's work. You would have to go

there next term, anyway, so perhaps that is the best solution of our difficulty."

As soon as the girls were again under the elm-tree, Adele faced them with glowing eyes. "Of course I am very sorry to lose our Miss Donovan," she said. "We all love her dearly, but since we can't have her, I am really glad that everything turned out just as it has, because, instead of going to Dorchester, perhaps we may all be able to go—guess where?"

"To the Linden Hall boarding-school!" Rosamond Wright joyfully responded.

"Oh, how I do wish that we could!" Peggy Pierce exclaimed.

"Let's go home this very minute and ask our fathers and mothers if we may go," Adele suggested, "and then this afternoon, let's meet at our Secret Sanctum and discuss our plans."

That afternoon at three, the seven maidens met at the log cabin in the meadows that were now purple and gold with bright autumn flowers.

"Girls, let's begin this meeting at once," Adele exclaimed. "We're all here, and I'm just wild to tell you my great and glorious news."

"Meeting is called to order," said Bertha Angel, who was now the chairman, and so the girls sat tailor-wise upon the floor.

"Madame President," Bertha began, but Adele interrupted, "Oh, Burdie, don't let's be formal to-day. Let's each say just whatever we wish. I am wild to know who can go to boarding-school besides myself."

"I, for one!" Rosamond Wright drawled. "My mamma dear will be glad to be rid of me, I am sure."

"Father thinks that it will be an excellent plan for me to go if there is a college preparatory course at Linden Hall," Bertha Angel told them quite calmly. The practical Bertha was never wildly hilarious, whatever happened.

"That's splendid," Adele exclaimed joyfully, "and I know by her beaming expression that Peggy Pierce can go, and as for

Doris Drexel, her devoted daddy always lets her do whatever she wishes. How about you, Bettykins?" she asked, turning to the youngest member, who was looking so dismal that they all knew at once that she could not go.

"I told Mother about it," Betty began, "and she said that she was sorry, but she couldn't think of asking Uncle George to spend another penny for me. You know when Papa died, Uncle George asked us to come right up here and live with him, and Mother says that it costs him ever so much to have us. Of course I'd love to go, but I—I just can't."

Poor little Betty found the disappointment harder than she could bear bravely, and tears splashed down her cheeks.

"You won't be left alone, Bettykins," Gertrude Willis said as she slipped an arm about their youngest member, "for I am not going, either."

"Gertrude, aren't you going?" came a chorus of protesting voices.

"Well, we simply can't go without *you*, or Bettykins either," Doris Drexel declared.

"Yes, you can," Gertrude replied brightly, "and Betty and I shall expect long letters from you every week telling all about the good times that you are having."

"But what will *you* do, Trudie, about going to school?" Bertha inquired. These two girls were always at the head of their classes and Bertha well knew that her friend did not want to have her studies interrupted.

"Father is going to teach me some of the subjects and Mother the others," Gertrude replied. "Mother was a high school teacher before she married, and Father was graduated from the theological seminary with highest honors."

Then, turning to the little one who was trying hard not to cry, she said kindly, "Bettykins, you may study with me, if you wish."

"Oh, Gertrude, that would help me so much!" Betty replied gratefully, smiling through the tears that would come.

"Girls," Adele declared brightly, "'My bones are very good prophets,' as Grandpa Dally used to say, and I just feel sure that before very many moons, we shall all seven of us be at Linden Hall Seminary for Young Ladies."

Whether or no Adele was a true prophet, you shall hear.

## CHAPTER SIX

### BETTY'S UNCLE GEORGE

THE next day Adele wrote a long letter to Carol Lorens telling her the good news that five of the Sunny Seven were to attend the Linden Hall boarding-school, that is, if there would be room for them. Mrs. Doring had written to Madame Deriby to inquire, and eagerly the five girls awaited an answering letter.

Meanwhile little Betty Burd was trying to be brave, but it was very hard. The day after the meeting at the Secret Sanctum, she went for a long ride on her pony, and, with tears slipping down her cheeks, she scolded herself: "You just ought to be ashamed, Betty Burd, when you have *so much* to be thankful for," she said aloud as she rode through a little wood, where everything was peaceful and quiet, save now and then a rustle in the dry leaves when a squirrel

darted across the path. "I'm not going to cry another tear!" she continued, as she whirled her pony's head toward home. "Uncle George has done so much for me, and I don't want him to even *guess* how I have longed to go to boarding-school with the other girls."

As she turned in at the drive, Mr. Drexel's car stopped a moment at the gate and her Uncle George leaped out. Betty was about to ride on, but he beckoned to her. "How's my little Puss?" he called, pretending not to notice the reddened eyes.

"Oh, I'm all right, thank you, Uncle George," the girl replied, trying to smile brightly, then, fearing that she would cry, she whirled her pony about and galloped to the barn, but her young Uncle George followed her.

He stabled the pony and then leading her to a garden bench, he exclaimed gaily, "Betty Bobbets, what's this I hear about you going away to boarding-school?"

"Me?" gasped Betty in surprise. "Why,

Uncle George, I'm not going at all. It's just the other girls who are going. Mamma says that you have done so much for us already that she couldn't think of asking you to send me. I wasn't going to say anything about it, Uncle George, how did you know?"

The young man laughed. "Why, Puss," he replied, "you don't suppose that you could keep a secret from your old uncle, do you? But the way that I found out was that Mr. Drexel just now told me that Doris was going away to boarding-school and he said that he supposed that I was going to send Betty, and I said, 'Sure thing, if the other girls are going.' "

"Oh, Uncle George!" Betty cried, scarcely able to believe what she had heard. "Really, truly, are you going to send me? Won't it take a lot of money? Mother says that we cost you ever so much as it is."

Taking both of her small hands in his, the young man replied earnestly, "Pet, your father was my older brother and he went without many things that he might send me

away to college, and now that I am a prosperous editor, do you suppose that for one minute I am going to neglect the education of his only little girl, and *my* only little girl, too? Indeed I am not, and from now on I want you to think of me as though I were your own daddy. I will give you an allowance, but, if you need more money, promise me that you will write and ask for it."

"Dear Uncle George," Betty said as she looked up with a joyous light shining through the tears that would come, "how can I thank you?" Then, impulsively she threw her arms about his neck and gave him a bear hug.

The other girls were glad to hear that their youngest member could go, if they did, but as yet they had not received a letter from the matron of Linden Hall.

The following afternoon the seven girls met at Adele's to review some of their studies. Of course it had been the practical Bertha's suggestion.

"We don't want to get behind," she told

them, "even if we are going to a boarding-school."

"Girls," Rosamond Wright declared, "I have my trunk almost packed and I'll be ready to take the train the moment that Madame Deriby writes, 'Come.' "

"But what if she writes, 'Don't come'?" Peggy Pierce inquired mischievously.

"Then I'll unpack it again," Rosamond declared quite undisturbed by the teasing, "but there isn't much danger of the matron's telling us not to come," she added. "Why, we six girls will be a small fortune to her and she will take us even if she has to build an addition to the school."

"*Hurray!* Here comes the postman," Betty Burd exclaimed joyously. "Adele, what if he has the fatal letter?"

"Then I suppose that he will give it to me," Adele replied merrily, as she went to the gate to meet Mr. Drakely. Then, turning around, with eyes shining, she triumphantly waved a white envelope. "Here it is," she called to the eager group on the

lawn, "but it is addressed to Mumsie, and she is down-town shopping and so we shall have to wait until she returns."

"Oh-h-h!" came in doleful chorus.

"How can we wait?" Betty Burd moaned.

"It won't be long, methinks," Adele exclaimed, "for unless I am mistaken, I hear Mother's step just beyond the lilacs."

In another moment that gracious lady appeared and the girls swooped down upon her.

"Well! well!" Mrs. Doring exclaimed gaily. "Why am I so popular?"

"Oh, Mumsie," Adele declared lovingly, "you know that you are *always* popular, but just now we want you to open this letter from Madame Deriby and tell us if we may go to the Linden Hall boarding-school."

They led Mrs. Doring to a rustic bench and then crowded about her while she read aloud:

"MY DEAR MRS. DORING:

"Your letter of recent date was received and I am pleased to inform you that I

have ample accommodations for the five young ladies."

"Oh!" wailed Betty Burd. "That's not counting me in."

"Shh! Don't interrupt," some one whispered, and Mrs. Doring continued:

"In fact I have room for eight more girls, as a very pleasant wing has just been completed. There are four double rooms, light and airy, overlooking the gardens and the orchard.

"If they prefer, the young ladies may have their uniforms made here at Linden. Since the fall term is already started, it would be better for them to come without delay.

"If this is convenient for you, please wire and I will have the school bus at the station to meet the young ladies next Saturday at four in the afternoon."

"There!" Rosamond announced. "See how wise I was to begin packing my trunk!"

"We will go to our homes this instant and pack ours," Peggy Pierce declared, for the next day would be Saturday.

"Gertrude," Adele said when the other

girls were gone, "I would be perfectly happy if only you were going with us."

"I, too, wish that I might go, Della," Gertrude said, returning her friend's embrace, "but a minister's salary is not princely, and there are so many of us. It won't be long till Christmas, however, and then you and I will meet again."

But they were to meet much sooner than that, and in a way they little dreamed.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE DEPARTURE FOR BOARDING-SCHOOL

NEVER before had there been a gayer scene at the railway station in that usually quiet town of Sunnyside, for the relatives and friends of the six travelers were all there to bid them good-bye.

“Wall, I swan!” ejaculated the old station-master as he appeared from the baggage-room. “Has the hull population of this here village decided to migrate to Buffalo?”

“Oh, no, Uncle Danny,” Adele replied, shouting in his ear, for the old man, whom every one called Uncle Danny, was very deaf. “Just six of us are going away to boarding-school.”

“Wall, now, you don’t tell! Sorry to hear you’re a-leavin’ us, Della. Even cloudy

weather seems a little brighter when *you're* around."

That was just what Granny Dorset had said when Adele had rushed over to the little cottage in Cherry Lane that morning to bid her good-bye. "Don't study too hard," Jack Doring called. "We boys would hate to have you get ahead of us."

"If you have any parties up at your school, send us an invitation," Bob Angel added.

"Oh, Bob!" Rosamond Wright gaily replied. "You know that you wouldn't come all the way to a suburb of Buffalo just to attend a boarding-school party."

"Slippery snails!" Jack suddenly exclaimed. "Dick Jensen, did you forget the order you received last night?"

Dick, a good-looking boy of fifteen, snapped his fingers and whirling on his heels, he ran to his car and returned with a big covered box, out of which he took seven smaller boxes daintily tied with blue and gold ribbons. Presenting one to each of the

girls, Dick exclaimed dramatically: "From the unsurpassable Jensen candy shop, gift of the Jolly Pirates to the seven sweetest girls in all the world."

"Oh, thank you, boys!" Adele cried with glowing eyes. "We will think of you every time that we eat one of these delicious candies."

"You won't think of us for long then," Bob teased, "not if you all eat candy as fast as Rosie does."

"Here comes the train that is to carry our fair ones away!" Jack shouted. Then, what a scurrying there was. The boys seized satchels and suit-cases and the girls threw their arms around their mothers and fathers for a last embrace, in the excitement of the moment not realizing how much they were going to miss them later. Then the boys escorted them into the train, found their seats, piled their luggage in the racks overhead, and Bob teasingly told them to be sure to get off when they reached their destination. The train started, and the boys made

a wild rush for the door and swung to the platform just in time to keep from being borne away.

Adele looked out of the window at her mother, who stood with her arm about Gertrude's waist. The tears rushed to her eyes. It was hard to leave these two who were so dear to her, but it would not be long before the Christmas holidays, and then they would all be together again.

Blinking back the tears, she turned with her bright smile toward the merry girls who were chatting and laughing all together.

"I do hope we are going to have some interesting adventures at Linden Hall," Rosamond was saying.

They were to have many adventures and the first one began the very next day.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### APPLE-BLOSSOM ALLEY

THAT Saturday afternoon Carol Lorens and Evelyn Dartmoor were sauntering arm in arm through the garden paths on the south side of the Linden Hall boarding-school, little dreaming of the delightful something which was just about to happen.

Soon a small girl appeared running toward them, calling, "Carol Lorens, here is a letter for you. Madame Deriby asked me to give it to you at once because there is something interesting in it."

At Linden Hall, as at many other boarding-schools, the matron glanced over each letter which the girls received.

"Oh, I wonder what the exciting news can be," Carol said as she went forward to take the letter from the wee lassie. "Thank

you, little Anne," she added. Then, when the small girl had skipped away to rejoin her playmates, Carol exclaimed, "Evelyn, there is just one thing that I wish this letter might contain."

The older girl smiled. Since Carol's coming to the school, Evelyn had learned to smile again. "Suppose you read it," she wisely suggested, "and then you will know what it is about."

"Let's sit here on this bench and I'll read it to you," Carol declared. When they were seated, she opened the missive and turned at once to the end to see who it was from.

"Oh, good!" she said. "Just as I wished, it is from Adele Doring. Now I'll begin at the beginning:

"DEAR CAROL: We have the best news to tell you. We girls are coming to Linden Hall and expect to arrive on Saturday afternoon at about four o'clock.

"We are all coming except Gertrude Willis, but I feel in my bones that something will happen to bring her, too, some day soon. I won't write any more, for we shall reach Linden almost as soon as this letter.

“ ‘ Give our love to Evelyn Dartmoor, for if she will let us, we mean to love her, too. From what you have written, I know that she must be just ever so nice. Good-bye for now.

“ ‘ ADELE DORING AND THE SUNNY SIX.’ ”

Carol sprang to her feet as she exclaimed excitedly, “ Why, to-day is Saturday, and it is half-past four now.”

“ And if I am not mistaken, here come your friends this very moment,” Evelyn declared as she pointed down the hill road. Carol looking, saw the school bus turning into the drive, and then, as it drew near, six merry faces beamed out of the windows and a moment later Carol and Evelyn were surrounded. No one was properly introduced, but no one seemed to care.

“ First of all you must come right in and meet our wonderful Madame Deriby,” Carol said, as she slipped her arm about Adele’s waist, and led the flock of laughing girls into the school, where they were to have many happy times in the months to come.

Madame Deriby, the matron of Linden

Hall, was delighted with the group of young girls. She looked into one eager face after another with her welcoming smile and then bade Carol and Evelyn show them the way to the south wing, where they would find their rooms in readiness.

Up the broad, softly carpeted front stairs they trooped. In the upper corridor, they saw uniformed girls in twos and threes who glanced at them curiously and the more friendly smiled upon them.

"There were forty pupils at Linden Hall before you came," Evelyn told them, "and now there are forty-six."

Carol, in the lead, opened a door and stepping back with a wave of her hand, she exclaimed, "Enter, young ladies! This is your future home."

"Oh, how pretty!" Adele declared, as they entered the corridor, the walls of which were a warm, creamy tint, bordered with apple-blossoms.

There were four large, sunny rooms opening from this hall. Each had a bow-window,

two of them looked out over the gardens and orchard toward a rolling hill country, the other two had a view of the valley and the blue water of the lake not far away.

"Girls," Adele exclaimed, "the rooms are each just as lovely as another, and I know that Betty and I shall be content to live in any one of them."

Rosamond Wright and Bertha Angel, who were to be roommates, entered the door nearest and said that they would take possession of that room. Peggy Pierce and Doris Drexel, who were called the "Inseparables," chose the corner overlooking the gardens; and Adele happily drew her little roommate into the sunny corner room which looked out toward the lake.

Carol and Evelyn followed Adele. "We'll go if we're in your way," Carol said, but Adele assured them that they were welcome visitors.

"Oh, girls," Betty Burd exclaimed as she looked about at the pretty bird's-eye maple furniture, the twin beds, the muslin curtains

fluttering in the breeze, and the window-seat heaped with pillows, "I just know that we are going to have the best times ever."

"Of course we are," Adele declared as she began to unpack her suit-case. "I'll keep my pictures and books and things on one side of the room, Betty, and you keep yours on the other. Oh, how do you do, Miss Angel?" she added as Bertha appeared in the open doorway. "Haven't we a pretty room?"

"Yes indeed!" Burdie replied. "I was just thinking about that fourth room. Wouldn't it be nice if Evelyn and Carol could have that instead of strange girls?"

"Oh, how I wish we could!" Carol exclaimed. "Evelyn, would you like to move into this wing? I am sure that Madame Deriby would be willing."

"Yes, I would like it and I know that you would enjoy being nearer your friends. I will go at once and ask Madame Deriby if she is willing that we make the change."

The permission was readily granted and

during the next hour the eight girls were happily busy making excursions to Evelyn's old room in the west wing, helping those two girls to move.

When every one was settled Rosamond, the romantic, exclaimed, "I used to read ever so many boarding-school stories and the girls always had a name for their corridor. South Wing isn't a bit pretty. Can't we call it something else?"

Adele looked at the walls for inspiration and found it. "Suppose we call it Apple-Blossom Alley," she suggested, and the others agreed.

"There's the get-ready-for-supper bell," Evelyn told them. "We have dinner at noon. Madame Deriby thinks it the wiser plan. You have half an hour to dress and then, when the next bell rings, we will start for the dining-room. We wear a plain blue uniform during the day, but in the evening we don any simple dress that we may have. That is, we are supposed to wear simple things, but Gladys Merle and her set prefer

frills and ruffles, and though Madame Deriby disapproves, as yet she has said nothing."

"Who is Gladys Merle?" Adele asked.

Evelyn arose to go as she replied, "Her father is an immensely wealthy man living in Chicago. He is called a Beef King and Gladys Merle seems to think that in some way entitles her to the distinction of royalty. She puts on a great many foolish airs and affectations. Of course it is easy for any one used to good breeding to tell that Gladys Merle has recently risen from the ranks of the uncultured. Not that that would matter in the least if she were a sweet sensible girl, but she isn't. She leads a clique of her own and they try to cultivate only the very rich and they snub each newcomer until they find out her social standing."

"Up to the present moment I have been completely and entirely snubbed," Carol exclaimed brightly. "Come, Evelyn, we must hasten, for the half-hour will soon be over."

When the second bell rang, the girls met in their Apple-Blossom Alley and Evelyn led them down the front stairs and into the dining-room where there were several long tables.

Miss Sharpleigh, the teacher in attendance, welcomed the new pupils and told them that Madame Deriby had granted them the privilege of having one table just by themselves.

"Oh, isn't this jolly?" Betty Burd exclaimed when they were seated, as she looked about the dining-room with her friendliest smile.

"Evelyn," Bertha Angel said softly, "who is the girl across the room? The one with the fluffy blonde hair and the china-blue eyes?"

"Why, that is Gladys Merle Jones. The girl I was telling you about," Evelyn replied.

"I thought so," Bertha declared with twinkling eyes. "Well, she will surely snub me because my father is a grocer."

"And me because my dad owns a dry-goods store," Peggy Pierce chimed in.

"Well, if she snubs any one of us, she may snub us all," Doris Drexel declared, and then they talked of other things.

That very evening the cattle king's daughter held a secret meeting of her clique to decide the fate of the newcomers. Strangely, however, the result of that meeting turned out disastrously for the one who least expected it, and that one was Gladys Merle Jones.

## CHAPTER NINE

### GLADYS MERLE'S CLIQUE

THAT night Madame Deriby permitted the newcomers to retire to their rooms directly after supper. At that hour it was the custom of the pupils to gather in the big recreation hall, either to play games or to converse in groups of three or more. They were not permitted to remain in groups of two at Linden Hall.

As soon as Evelyn and the other girls from Sunnyside had gone, Gladys Merle called a meeting of her particular clique in a palm-sheltered corner.

"Well, what do you make of these new girls?" Anita Ryan asked. Anita never ventured an opinion of her own, being always content, it would seem, to echo Gladys Merle.

"I presume that some of them come from well-to-do families," this young lady condescended to say, "but I am not so sure of all of them, and there is one among them whom I think we should especially ignore until we find out something definite about her social standing."

"Which one is that?" Anita inquired.

"It's the one who came first," was the answer. "That Carol Lorens! Now, is there any way for us to find out how much money her father has?"

"I overheard Madame Deriby saying that the Lorens family were old friends of the Dartmoors and that surely ought to be enough for us," little Janet Nagel declared.

Janet was not always as submissive a follower as Gladys Merle would wish.

"Well, hearsay is not enough for me if it is for you. I shall not associate with that girl until I know who she is, nor with any of the rest of them!" Gladys declared with a toss of her head.

"I have an aunt living near Sunnyside,"

Anita said. "I'll write her and ask about these new girls."

"But Madame Deriby reads every letter that goes out of this school, and she never would permit us to write and inquire about the social standing of these new pupils," Janet Nagel declared.

"Indeed, is that so?" Gladys Merle inquired with a slight lift of her brow. "I am quite sure that Madame Deriby does not read all of my letters, Miss Nagel. There are other ways of mailing them than in the school box, as perhaps you do not know." Then turning to Anita she said, "Go up to your room and write that letter and then you and I will slip out to the front gate and put it in the letter box."

Anita went and soon returned with the letter concealed in her pocket. They waited their chance and when all of the girls, with the teacher in charge, were interested in a basket-ball contest, they slipped out of the basement door and ran as fast as they could down the dark shrubbery-edged path to the

gate which seemed very far away at night. Suddenly they heard footsteps crunching on the gravel walk. They darted behind a bush to hide and none too soon, for in another moment two figures appeared. One of them was Patrick O'Neil and the other was Billie, who assisted him in the gardens and stables.

"It's mighty queer!" the boy was saying. "I am sure I saw somebody on the walk a minute ago, but now there isn't anybody there."

"Probably 'twas just shadows," Patrick replied. "When the moon goes in and out behind the clouds, the way it's doin' tonight, it's ghostly-lookin' here under the trees."

"I don't believe it was shadows," Bill insisted. "It might be robbers or something. I'm going to hunt among the bushes. Give me your flashlight."

Gladys and Anita clung to each other scarcely daring to breathe. There was a moment of suspense and then Patrick said:

"Guess I didn't bring it. Thought I put it in my coat pocket. Come along, Bill. I tell you 'twasn't nothing but shadows."

The girls could see that Bill went reluctantly, and they didn't dare creep out from behind the shrubbery until they were sure that the man and boy had reached the stables, but they didn't know Bill.

He told Pat that he guessed he'd stay out a spell and watch the moon, but instead he hid not far from the girls, for he was very sure that he had not been mistaken. When the crunching footsteps were heard no more, Anita and Gladys crept out and ran at top speed for the gate. Bill, elated to find that he had not been wrong, darted behind the hedge and kept close back of them.

The gate was a long way from the school, and a large iron-framed lantern hung just above it. For one second the girls were in the full light, and Billie, who had hoped they were robbers, was indeed disappointed.

As they returned, he stepped out in front of them and said, "Huh! Nothin' but girls.

Breakin' the rules, I s'pose." Then, thrusting his hands in his pockets, he strode off toward the stables.

The two girls, keeping hidden in the shadows, crept back through the basement door and joined the others behind the palms.

"Well, the letter is safely mailed," Anita whispered to the waiting group. "I told Auntie to be careful how she worded her answer so that Madame Deriby would not suspect that we had written."

"You would probably be expelled if it were found out," Janet remarked.

"Perhaps *you* are planning to tell on us, Miss Nagel," Gladys Merle flashed.

"No, I'm not," was the calm reply, "but probably Billie will, or Patrick."

Gladys Merle, pretending not to hear, turned to Anita as she said, "We ought to have an answer from that letter in two or three days, so keep on the lookout."



"HUH! NOTHIN' BUT GIRLS."—*Page 79.*



## CHAPTER TEN

### THE DOWNFALL OF GLADYS MERLE

ON Monday morning, Gladys Merle and Anita Ryan, the two who were especially interested, began to watch for an answer, but of course none came that day. On Tuesday morning, the rain fell heavily. Gladys Merle looked out of a class-room window watching for the rural postman, but no one appeared.

“Isn’t it just our luck?” Gladys exclaimed at the mid-morning recreation, as the two girls stood gazing dolefully out at the storm.

“The hill road will be so muddy in a few hours that it will be impossible for the postman’s horse and cart to get up here,” Anita declared, when Gladys, clutching her arm, whispered excitedly, “Look, there he is now!”

A man, well protected by a rubber slicker, soon entered the school and deposited a mail-bag at Madame Deriby's door.

"How I do wish Miss Sharpleigh would come now and sort out the letters," Gladys Merle had just said, when a gong sounded, which called them back to their classes. Never before had an hour seemed so long, and when at last they were free, they went directly to Madame Deriby's office, but the mail-bag was still unopened.

"Oh, Miss Sharpleigh," Anita said in her sweetest manner, "would it be too much trouble for you to see if there is a letter for me? I am expecting one from my Aunt Laura."

Miss Sharpleigh, chancing to be in a pleasant humor, unfastened the mail-bag and glanced over the letters. Selecting one, she opened it, as was the custom, but, instead of reading it, as she usually did, she merely glanced at the end to see if it were really from a relative. "Your loving Aunt Laura" was all that she read, and then, be-

lieving that the contents of the letter must be all right, she handed it to Anita, who, with a look of triumph at Gladys, hurried from the office.

"Now let's all meet in my room as soon as dinner is over," she whispered. "Tell the others to be there promptly."

An hour later eight girls were gathered in Anita's room. Because of the storm, they could not have their usual outdoor recreation and so they had been told that they might do whatever they wished.

"Sit down, every one," Gladys Merle exclaimed. "Anita has read the letter to herself and now she will read it aloud to you. I guess you will be surprised at what you are to hear.

"Lock the door, somebody," Gladys Merle went on. "We don't want to be interrupted while we are deciding the fate of these newcomers.

Jenny Clark sprang up to do their leader's bidding, and then, when she was reseated in the semicircle on the floor in front of the

fireplace, Anita Ryan opened the letter and began to read :

"MY DEAR NIECE: You ask about a group of girls who recently left Sunnyside to attend the Linden Hall boarding-school. They all belong to well-to-do families except Carol Lorens. I have been told that her father is a poor lawyer who could not afford to send his daughter to a fashionable school and it is rumored that she was sent there as a paid companion for the wealthy Mr. Dartmoor's granddaughter."

"There! What do you think of that?" Gladys Merle exclaimed as she looked about triumphantly. "You see I was right. It pays to snub a girl until you find out who she really is."

Then, to the surprise of the others, little Janet Nagel said, defiantly, "I don't care if Carol Lorens' father is poor. I think she is a lovely girl, and I, for one, am not going to snub her. One might think that your father was nobility, Gladys Merle, by the way you act."

The young lady addressed tossed her

head indignantly. "My father is rich enough to buy any kingdom on this earth," she boasted, "and he's handsome and stately," she added, but before many days passed she had occasion to regret that she had uttered this untrue statement, since it had not been necessary.

That night when the pupils were gathered in their recreation hall, Gladys Merle brushed against Carol and did not apologize for her rudeness. Janet Nagel, who had seen this, flashed an indignant glance at Gladys and then hurrying after Carol, she slipped her arm about her waist as she said: "I like you, Miss Lorens. I wish I might be one of your friends."

Gladys stared after the retreating form of this, the first of her followers to desert her, and then turning to the others she remarked, scornfully, "We are well rid of her! Hereafter we will snub Janet Nagel as well as this Carol Lorens. Adele Doring is the one whom we should cultivate, for Anita's aunt wrote that Mr. Doring owns

nearly all of the land around Sunnyside and that he is very rich."

The next day Gladys Merle tried to cultivate Adele but to her surprise, instead of acting as though she felt highly honored, that maiden, nodding coolly, gathered up her books and walked away.

"Well, I declare!" Gladys Merle thought. "Such airs! But perhaps she hasn't heard how rich my father is." Gladys was secretly glad that none of her clique were in the library to see their leader being snubbed.

Adele *did* know how rich Gladys Merle's father was, but she also knew that her friend, Carol Lorens, had been rudely treated, and the Sunnysiders were always loyal one to another.

Before many hours had passed, Gladys Merle deeply regretted that she had asked Anita to write that letter of inquiry.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### TRUE NOBILITY

THE next day Gladys Merle received a letter from her mother in Chicago stating that her father had gone to Buffalo on business and would drop in at Linden Hall and pay her a call. Gladys was alone in her room when she read this letter, which was lucky, for her uncontrolled anger and grief were so great that she threw herself down on the bed and sobbed.

“I’ll be disgraced forever if Pa comes here,” she thought, “after all I’ve said about his handsome looks. But he shan’t come! When he telephones, I’ll tell him that I would rather meet him in Buffalo.”

Because of her tear-swollen face, Gladys Merle did not go down to the library for the “hour of politeness.” It might have

been better for her peace of mind if she had been there. Miss Merritt had been drilling the girls in graceful curtsies and they were just resting in groups, when, at the open front door there appeared a short, stout, red-faced man who was smiling affably. To the amazement of the girls, he walked into the room without ceremony.

"This here is the young ladies' boarding-school, ain't it?" he asked genially of Janet Nagel, who happened to be nearest.

"Is my gal anywhere handy? I dropped in to surprise her sort of, though her ma did write that I'd be hikin' around this way."

Miss Merritt stepped up to the stranger and said kindly, "If you will tell me the name of your daughter, I will have her called."

"My gal is Gladys Jones," the father said proudly. He did not notice the murmur of amazement, nor would he have understood it, but in that moment Gladys Merle lost her following.

A maid was sent to call the girl, but she pleaded illness, and asked that her father be permitted to come to her. What happened, even the girls in her own clique never knew, but for hours after Mr. Jones had left, a puzzled and saddened man, Gladys Merle refused to leave her room. She was sure that all the pupils would be laughing at her and she determined that she would not remain in that school another day. She would pack her trunk and leave the very next morning for her home. She had told an untruth. She had said that her father was stately and handsome, when all the time she knew, only too well, that he was merely an uneducated ranchman. True, he had great wealth, but Gladys Merle had been learning in the last few days that the girls of Linden Hall did not have the respect for riches that she had supposed they would have. She was still feeling humiliated from the cool manner in which Adele Doring had treated her.

“I’ll pack my trunk this very minute and

I'll leave this school without facing a one of those horrid girls," she thought, and springing up she pulled open her bureau drawers and was just about to take out an armful of clothing when there came a light rap on her door. Gladys Merle tossed her head. "I just won't see anybody," she thought. "I suppose it's Janet Nagel come to taunt me, but she won't get the chance, so she might as well go away."

However, the rapping continued, and a sweet voice, which certainly was not Janet's, was calling, "Gladys Merle, may I come in a moment, please?"

Out of curiosity Gladys opened the door a crack. Then she stepped back in surprise, and her face flushed a deep crimson, for the girl standing without was no other than Carol Lorens.

Only a few moments before Janet Nagel had told Carol the whole story and that kind girl felt sorry indeed for Gladys and decided to call on her and see if she could

not help her in some way. "May I come in?" Carol repeated pleasantly.

Gladys Merle's first impulse was to slam the door but instead, she heard herself saying, "Oh, come in if you want to. I've been so humiliated I don't care about anything."

Then, flinging herself on the bed, she sobbed and sobbed. Carol closed the door and went to the bedside as she said kindly, "I know that I am a stranger to you, Gladys, but my mother has so often told me how to find the silver lining of each trouble that comes, I thought perhaps I might help you."

"There isn't any help out of my trouble," Gladys Merle sobbed afresh. "I've been a silly, that's what! I told the girls that my father was stately and handsome, and he isn't, he's as backwoodsy as he can be, but he had no right to come to the school and humiliate me."

"I saw your father," Carol said, "and I liked his honest face and the merry twinkle

in his kind blue eyes, and if you are better educated than he is, remember that it is your father to whom you owe it. My great-grandfather, Gladys, had a royal title offered to him by the king of England, but he refused it, saying that he would rather remain simply a minister of the gospel and a gentleman. There is a book down in the library called 'The Making of Royalty,' that tells all about it, and my name is in it as being the youngest member of the American branch of the family of Lorens. I was the youngest member then, but now there are the twins."

Gladys Merle gasped. To think that she had been trying to snub a girl whose ancestor might have been royalty and wouldn't.

An hour later the pupils of Linden Hall Seminary were amazed to see Gladys Merle Jones and Carol Lorens enter the dining-room together.

The next morning Gladys telephoned to Buffalo and asked her father if she might come up and spend the day with him.

Mr. Jones was overjoyed and decided that a headache had been the cause of the outburst of the day before.

After that the young ladies of Linden Hall heard no more about Gladys Merle's great wealth.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### A WISH FULFILLED

A WEEK, crowded with new and delightful experiences, had passed since Adele Doring and her friends had arrived at Linden Hall Seminary. The girls from Sunnyside were well started in their classes and having resolved to study earnestly, they spent much of their time with their books, but of course there were the recreation hours and the free time, and long rambles accompanied by the youngest teacher, Miss Merritt, and horse-back rides down the beautiful wood roads with the riding-master, Mr. Haley.

One day when the girls were leaving their classes, Janet Nagel met them in the corridor and told them that Madame Deriby wished them to remain in the library for a while and come to her office one by one as their names would be called.

What could it mean? Had they broken

any of the rules they wondered as they filed into the large quiet room which happened to be unoccupied. Before they could discuss the matter, Madame Deriby's door opened and Bertha Angel was called.

Little Betty Burd clutched Adele and whispered, "Oh, Della, do you suppose Madame Deriby would mind very much if I went in with you? I'm scared to go alone!"

"Scared of what, Little One?" Adele asked merrily. "Madame Deriby is not a witch! She is as kind and motherly as she can be."

Five minutes passed and Bertha came out of the office smiling as though her visit had been a pleasant one.

"Doris, you are to go in next," she said.

When the door had closed behind Doris, Betty seized Bertha and whispered:

"What happened to you in there, Burdie? Were you scared?"

"Of course not," Bertha declared. "Madame Deriby just wanted to know which

courses I preferred taking and if I cared to study music and languages."

"I suppose you told her that you would like to study Chinese and Greek," the little girl said.

Bertha laughed gaily.

"No, Bettykins," she replied, "your guess is all wrong, but I did tell Madame Deriby that I would like to take Latin and French."

"Oh-h!" moaned the child dismally, "and I suppose now she will expect us all to want to be as wise as you are."

But Betty said no more, for the office door was opening and her own name was being called. With a wild look at Adele she disappeared, to return in a very few moments, her pretty face dimpled with smiles.

"Oh! Madame Deriby is a perfect dear!" she exclaimed. "I'll never be scared of her again. I just know that I am going to adore her!"

Last of all it was Adele's turn, and when she came out of the office, her eyes were shining like stars.

"Oh, girls!" she said, "something wonderful has happened! Come up to our room as quickly as ever you can and I will tell you all about it!"

Much mystified, the girls trooped after their favorite and when they reached their sun-flooded Apple-Blossom Alley, they clamored, "Della, do tell us what it is. You look as though something ever so nice was just about to happen."

"See if you can guess!" that maiden exclaimed. "It's the one thing that I've been wishing and *wishing* for the very most of all."

"Oh, then it will not be hard to guess," Betty Burd declared. "It must be that Gertrude Willis is coming to Linden Hall."

Adele nodded brightly. "Sit down, everybody, and I'll tell you all about it."

Down on the floor they sat in a semicircle. They found this better for confidences than being scattered about the room on chairs.

"Well," Adele began, "I was in Madame

Deriby's office and in answer to her question, I had just told her that I liked literature best of all, when there came a knock on the door and Miss Berry, the kindergarten teacher, came in and her eyes were red and swollen. She held an open letter. Madame Deriby stood up and put an arm about her. Miss Berry, you know, is hardly more than a girl herself. They had both forgotten about me, and I was wondering if I ought to leave the room when the teacher said that her little brother was ill, and cried for her day and night, and she did so want to go to him.

"'Of course you must go!' Madame Deriby said kindly. 'Ask Marie to help you pack and I will have Patrick bring around the bus. You ought to be able to catch the afternoon train.'

"When Miss Berry was gone, Madame Deriby telephoned to the stables and then she sat down and looked thoughtful for a moment. At last, turning to me with a smile, she said, 'Adele, I was just wishing

that I knew some real nice older girl who would like to come to Linden Hall and help teach the very little ones in exchange for her tuition.'

"Girls, when I heard that I almost cried out in delight. However, I tried to hide my joy and I said as quietly as I could, 'Madame Deriby, I know just such a girl and I am sure that you would like to have her.' Then I told her all about our darling Trudie. Madame Deriby was ever so pleased and she told me to write and ask if Gertrude can come next Saturday, and since that will be day after to-morrow, I must pen the epistle at once," she ended, springing up and skipping to her desk.

Then, when the letter had been mailed, the girls from Sunnyside waited in almost breathless eagerness to know whether or not their dear friend could join them at Linden Hall.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE NEW TEACHER

GREAT was the excitement in Apple-Blossom Alley on Saturday morning. Adele was up before the rising bell and as soon as she was dressed, she tapped on each of the neighboring doors calling, "Wake up! Maybe Gertrude is coming to-day."

"I am so glad that it is Saturday," Betty Burd declared. "Perhaps Madame Deriby will allow us all to go to the station to meet Trudie, and won't we hug her though?"

"But we are not sure that she is coming," Bertha Angel said.

"I'm sure!" Adele declared. "Oh, good, there's the breakfast bell and now maybe we shall hear something about it."

Just as the eight girls were tripping down the wide front stairs, a telephone rang in Madame Deriby's office. Marie, a maid, ap-

peared from the library to answer it, but a second later she came out and beckoned to Adele. "Please, Miss, will you answer the 'phone? It's long-distance and I'm not good at hearing," she said.

With a rapidly beating heart, the girl took up the receiver.

"Is this the Linden Hall boarding-school?" a faint voice inquired.

"Yes it is," Adele replied.

"This is Mr. Willis and I wish to say that my daughter, Gertrude, is leaving on the early morning train and will reach Linden at two o'clock this afternoon."

"O goodie! Mr. Willis, I'm so glad! This is Adele. Tell Trudie the bus will be at the station to meet her. Good-bye."

Adele turned around with shining eyes and found Madame Deriby smiling down at her.

"So your friend can come," she said kindly. "I am very glad. Would you girls like to ride down in the bus to meet the train?"

"Thank you! We would just love to!" Adele declared.

The other pupils were already gathered in the dining-room when this group entered and they wondered at the eight shining faces.

"Something must have happened to please those girls from Sunnyside," one of the seniors remarked. And something surely had.

"Adele," Peggy Pierce exclaimed, when they were once again in Apple-Blossom Alley, "where is Gertrude to sleep? All of the beds on this corridor are occupied."

"Perhaps I would better go back to my old room," Evelyn Dartmoor suggested.

"No, indeed," Adele declared. "Betty, if Madame Deriby is willing, don't you think that we could have another single bed in here for Gertrude?"

"Oh, Della, I'd love to have her with us," the little one cried clapping her hands gleefully.

"Then I will go at once and ask for per-

mission," Adele said. Madame Deriby had planned giving Miss Berry's pretty room to Gertrude for the time being, but when she realized how much it meant to the girls from Sunnyside to have their friend with them, she smilingly consented, and soon thereafter Patrick appeared with another single bed and it was found that there was plenty of room to place the three in a row.

Evelyn, who had slipped away, reappeared carrying a bowl of beautiful roses.

"Girls," she said, "I want to put these flowers that Grandpa sent me on the little table by Gertrude's bed."

"Oh, Evelyn, how nice!" Adele exclaimed. "I am sure that Trudie will like her corner."

During the morning hours, the girls went about their tasks with happy hearts and when one would pass another, she would joyfully exclaim, "Gertrude's coming to-day!"

At last one-thirty arrived and also Patrick and the school bus, into which the eight girls from Apple-Blossom Alley climbed,

then, down the elm-arched drive the two spirited white horses trotted at a brisk pace.

It was five minutes to two when the bus drew up at the station, but no one was in sight. Fifteen minutes passed, and the train did not appear.

"It must be late," Adele said. "I'm going to hunt for the station-master and inquire." She found him asleep in the warm waiting-room.

"Mr. Station-Master," Adele said clearly, "will you kindly tell me why the two o'clock train is late?"

The grey-bearded man sat up with a start. "Wall, is that so?" he exclaimed. "Sure enough, it must be late, but that's nothin' unusual. It's a short line and the train sort of comes and goes to suit itself. Nothin' could happen to it unless it ran off the track. It couldn't bump into anything, for it's the only train between here and Buffalo."

Just then the telephone rang and the old station-master limped to get the message. "Wall, now, you don't say!" he exclaimed

in surprise to the person at the other end of the line. "That there train has done queer things in its time, but this sure is the queerest."

"It isn't wrecked, is it?" Adele asked anxiously.

"Nope, not exactly, so to speak," the old man replied, "but the switch didn't work right about half a mile from here, and the train went off on a siding and there she's stuck."

"Oh, poor Gertrude, all alone off on a siding," Adele exclaimed, then she added, "But, Patrick, if it's only half a mile from here, can't we go over and get her?"

"Climb roight in," the Irishman called, "and hold toight, for I'm goin' to do some fast drivin'."

The spirited horses, being urged by Patrick's shouts and the snapping of the long whip, went on a gallop, and before long they saw a short train, from which Gertrude laughingly emerged to greet them.

"You poor darling!" Adele said when they

had all hugged her. "This is not a very 'propitious beginning' as Bob says."

"I didn't mind it at all," Gertrude told them, and then, as the bus started on its schoolward way, she added with eyes shining, "Oh, girls, I am so glad, so very, very glad that I am with you at last. I just know that we are going to have the happiest times together."

Gertrude little dreamed that she was soon to meet some one in the neighborhood of Linden who eventually would bring even greater joy into her life.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### ORPHAN ALISE

MADAME DERIBY had been charmed with her youngest teacher, and on Monday Gertrude took Miss Berry's place and smiled lovingly down into the uplifted faces of her ten pupils whose ages ranged from five to seven. Before the hour was over the tots loved her and when at last the bell of dismissal rang, they crowded about her, and seated in the low rocker she held many of them in her arms and told them of the pleasant times they were to have all together.

One, a golden-haired little girl of six, stood back holding her dolly close and watching the merry group with wistful brown eyes. Then a kindly faced woman in cap and apron came to take the little ones to the nursery, but this child did not go.

Believing that she was alone Gertrude sat

for a moment looking out of the window and thinking of the brothers and sisters at home, perhaps just a bit lonely, when she felt a small hand touching her timidly.

Looking down, she beheld the sweet face of little Alise gazing up at her.

"Miss Gertrude," she asked, "will you please let me love you? I'm not anybody's little girl now."

Lifting the child to her lap, the young teacher held her close as she murmured tenderly, "Dear, darling little Alise. I know how lonely you must be and indeed I do want you to love me. I was just thinking of my sister Ruth at home and feeling a bit lonely for her. I'll tell you what," she added brightly, "you be little sister to me and I'll be big sister to you. Won't that be nice?"

The child's eyes were shining happily, when the nurse reappeared, having realized that Alise must have been left behind. When they were gone Adele came and found Gertrude still seated in the low chair and

deep in thought. Sitting on a stool beside her she asked, "What is it, Trudie? Is something troubling you?"

Gertrude put her hand lovingly on her friend's shoulder as she replied, "Yes, Della, in a way. I was just wondering why some of us have so much love in our lives and others so little. You and I have so many home folks to care for us and here is Alise, scarcely more than a baby, starting to grow up into girlhood with no one to love her. Madame Deriby was telling me about her only this morning. It seems that her mother, who was a beautiful girl, married against a stern father's wishes and he never forgave her, and when she died, he even refused to see her child. Instead, he had his lawyer bring her here to Linden Hall. Even Madame Deriby does not know who the grandfather is nor where he lives. Now, isn't that sad? The child will be immensely rich some day, the lawyer said, but oh, Della, money can never take the place of home love."

Then rising, she added brightly, "Well, Alise is going to have some one to love her, and that some one is her new teacher. Adele, isn't it queer about these hearts of ours? We think that they are bulging full of love, but, when the need arises, they can always make room for just one more."

These two girls, as they sauntered toward the tennis-courts, arm in arm, little dreamed that Alise was to bring a wonderful happiness to one of them.

The following Saturday, the equestrian class with Mr. Haley, their riding-master, started out for a canter. The road which they followed led between wide meadows, some purple and gold with autumn flowers and others, where recently cut grass was stacked in fragrant, sun-warmed mounds.

Now and then they passed a neat, white farmhouse with bushes of golden-glow gleaming cheerfully in the dooryards. Then they entered a quiet wood where the maples were turning red and yellow. Beyond the wood a high, ivy-grown stone wall indicated

that they were about to pass a country gentleman's estate. Far back among wide spreading trees, they could catch glimpses of the turrets of a castle-like home.

"Mr. Haley, do you know anything about this place?" Adele inquired.

"It belongs to an old and very wealthy family," the riding-master replied, "but it has not been occupied for about ten years. I am acquainted with Mr. Diggitt, the head gardener, and, since Elmhurst is one of the finest estates in the countryside, perhaps it would interest you young ladies to canter about the grounds."

"Oh, Mr. Haley, I do wish that we might!" Rosamond, the romantic, exclaimed. "I adore old places like this."

A moment later they were drawing rein in front of an ivy-covered lodge-house near the great iron gates. A plump, pleasant-faced woman bustled out and admitted them. "You'll find my man in the rose-garden," Mrs. Diggitt said as she dropped a curtsy.

Following the path indicated, they soon

came upon the gardener, who greeted them pleasantly and leaned on his hoe to talk to Mr. Haley.

"You keep everything in excellent condition, Mr. Diggitt," the riding-master said, then he inquired, "Is it true that the owner, Mr. Ellsworth, has not been here in ten years?"

"Yes, it's true," the gardener replied, "and he may not come for another ten; there's no way of telling. I never saw him myself, for I've only worked here this four year past, but the gardener before me said that the old gentleman was very hard to please, and if he should come, sudden-like, he would expect to find everything spick and span. Anyhow, I like to keep things up myself. Flowers are like children to me, and I don't like to see them lookin' neglected."

"I have heard that Mr. Ellsworth is a crusty, overbearing old man and very difficult to deal with," Mr. Haley said, then he added, "Mr. Diggitt, do you mind if these

young ladies canter about the grounds? They will be careful to do no harm."

The permission was granted and a moment later Adele and Gertrude were riding side by side toward a picturesque grouping of trees in the midst of which something white was gleaming.

"I think it is a marble statue," Gertrude said.

"You are right!" Adele exclaimed as she drew rein. "How very beautiful it is and how lifelike! I do believe that a young girl posed for that statue."

Gertrude was gazing admiringly at the sweet, chiseled face, and, after a moment of thoughtful silence, she said, "Della, it almost seems as though I had known some one whom that statue resembles, but of course I haven't."

Suddenly Adele uttered a joyful exclamation. "I know whom it resembles!" she said. "Little Alise! She has that same sweet, half-wistful expression."

"True!" Gertrude replied. "There is a

name chiseled on the pedestal. It is so moss-grown that I cannot read it from here.” Out of curiosity the two girls dismounted, and bending, they studied for a moment the almost obliterated letters.

Suddenly Gertrude seized Adele as she exclaimed, “Della, this is almost uncanny. The first name is Alise, and the last begins with E-l, so of course it is Ellsworth. Do you suppose that can be a statue of our little Alise’s mother, and that crabbed old man Mr. Haley and the gardener were talking about, is her grandfather?”

“He might be,” Adele said as they remounted their horses. “The name Alise is uncommon, and then again, the grandfather must have been familiar with Linden Hall or he would not have sent the child there, and, of course he would be, if he had lived so near, but it doesn’t much matter *who* the grandfather is, since he refuses to love our little Alise.”

“I just wish that I could see him face to face,” Gertrude declared indignantly, “and



F. LILLY-YOUNG

"I DO BELIEVE THAT A YOUNG GIRL POSED FOR THAT STATUE."—*Page 113.*



I would tell him how cruel he is to leave that poor sensitive child alone among strangers."

Little did the girls dream of the interesting adventure that the finding of the statue was to bring to them in the near future.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### THE GRANDFATHER OF ALISE

THE following Friday, Madame Deriby asked the youngest teacher to ride to the station in the bus to meet a very small new pupil who was coming to Linden in the care of the conductor.

On her return, Gertrude hailed Adele who was pacing up and down the deserted terrace memorizing a French poem. Della turned and waited for her dearest friend. "Why, Trudie!" she exclaimed. "Your eyes are shining as though you had some wonderful news to tell. Has anything happened?"

"Not yet," the other laughingly replied, "but it's going to happen soon. Adele, just think of it, he has really come."

"Who has come?" Della inquired, much

mystified. "I didn't know that you were expecting any one," then she added eagerly, "You don't mean Jack or Bob, do you?"

Gertrude shook her head. "Oh, I'm so excited," she declared, "but all that I really know about it is this. When I was down at the station just now, I saw several big trunks, and on the end of one I read the name A. R. Ellsworth. Of course, that is the crabbed old gentleman who lives at Elmhurst, and now, if only I can find a way, I am going to call upon him and tell him what I think of him for neglecting poor little Alise."

Just then a gong sounded which called the girls to their classes and they went indoors, both very much interested in the possible owner of the trunks. The next day, being Saturday, the opportunity for which Gertrude had been wishing came in the form of an errand which Madame Deriby asked her youngest teacher to do, since Patrick and Billie were both otherwise engaged.

About a mile and a half from the school

was the farm of Mr. O'Rourke, and he it was who provided butter and eggs and chickens and vegetables, whenever they were needed at Linden Hall, and this day Gertrude had been asked to ride to the farm and order turkeys for the approaching Thanksgiving dinner.

"Ask Adele to accompany you, if you wish," Madame Deriby had said, and Gertrude fairly flew up to the corner room where she found her dearest friend alone.

"The momentous hour has arrived!" Gertrude exclaimed. "We are to go on an errand which leads us past the iron gates of Elmhurst."

"But, Trudie, you never would *dare* to ride up to the house and ask to speak to that dreadful Mr. Ellsworth, would you? He might not be the grandfather at all, and if he is as grouchy as every one says, your visit would not be a very pleasant one."

"But I intend to take you along to protect me," Gertrude laughingly declared. "Do close that book, Adele. You ought not

to study French on Saturday. Let's don our riding-habits as soon as ever we can."

It was a glorious Indian-summer day with a soft, sun-warmed breeze wafting to them pleasant fragrance from wood and field. The two girls rode along, sometimes silently enjoying the loveliness of the morning, and again talking together, wondering what the outcome of their visit would be. If they could have known, perhaps they would have passed Elmhurst without entering.

They were soon at the lodge-house and the neat little woman appeared and opened the gates.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Diggitt," Gertrude said in her friendly way. "Do you remember us? We are pupils from Linden Hall and we were here recently with Mr. Haley, our riding-master, but to-day we have come to call upon Mr. Ellsworth, if we may."

There was a surprised expression on the woman's face, and then she said, "Like as not Mr. Ellsworth will be pleased to see

you. Just ride up to the big house and inquire."

Leaving their horses hitched to the iron posts by the side of the drive, the two girls ascended the broad stone steps and lifted the heavy knocker on the carved oak doors. Then they waited, their hearts fluttering in excitement.

A trim maid appeared and upon hearing that they wished to see Mr. Ellsworth, she bade them enter the library and wait a bit.

The girls were charmed with the high-ceiled, mahogany-furnished room which combined elegance and comfort. A log was burning on the fireplace over which hung the portrait of an old man, whose eyes, under shaggy brows, looked sharply down at them.

"Trudie, if that is a portrait of the gentleman we are calling upon," Adele said softly, "I think that we would better retreat before he comes in. His face looks so stern that I am sure he will order us out, when you tell him your errand."

But before they could leave, even if they had so desired, a voice close behind them said, "Good-morning, young ladies. Did you wish to see me?"

Somehow this voice did not sound as gruff as they had expected, and turning, they were indeed surprised to find themselves facing a tall, good-looking lad of about eighteen.

Gertrude's self-possession never deserted her. "There must be some mistake!" she said. "We came to call upon an elderly gentleman, Mr. Ellsworth, whose portrait, I believe, is hanging over the mantel."

"Grandfather is dead," the lad replied, "and my aunt and I have inherited this estate, but won't you be seated? Aunt Louise will be down directly and she will be glad to make your acquaintance."

"Mr. Ellsworth," Gertrude began, "I hardly know how to state our errand, but if you have a moment to spare I would like to tell you a story."

Then Gertrude told simply all that she knew of little Alise and of her resemblance to the statue. The lad listened with intense interest.

"Tell me the name of the child," he said when Gertrude paused.

"Alise Alderly," the girl had just replied when a pale, beautiful woman appeared in the doorway.

"Aunt Louise," the lad exclaimed, leaping to meet her and taking her hand, "I have news for you, wonderful news! These young ladies are from Linden Hall and they tell me that there is a child attending the school named Alise Alderly."

The woman, her sweet face flushed with eagerness, held out both hands to the girls, who had risen. "Do tell me about her!" she begged. "Just before my father died, he tried to tell me what he had done with my dear sister's baby, but he was so weak that he could not. We have searched everywhere for the past three months but have found no trace of her."

The girls were touched by the charming woman's emotion and being again reseated, Gertrude told all that she knew of the orphan child.

A happy light shone in the face of the listener as the story progressed, and when it was finished, she turned to her nephew, with tears in her eyes, as she said, "Arthur, I am convinced that we have found my sister's little one. Please order my car. I must visit Linden Hall at once and make further inquiries. If it is my dear sister's child, oh, how happy, happy I shall be!"

When the girls were again on the highway, riding toward the farm beyond Elmhurst, Gertrude exclaimed, "If Alise is really related to that lovely woman and fine lad, how glad I will be that we were brave enough to make that visit, and I will now confess that I did dread meeting the stern old gentleman, especially after seeing his portrait."

"I wish we might become better ac-

quainted with the Ellsworths," Adele said.  
"They are such charming people."

This wish was to be fulfilled in a most delightful way.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### TAMING KATRINA

ONE Saturday directly after breakfast the girls from Sunnyside were asked to meet in Adele's room before beginning the tasks of the morning.

"What does it mean?" Doris Drexel inquired. "This is my practice hour and Professor Patz has given me such a difficult piece to learn."

"We won't keep you but a moment," Adele said. "Sit down, everybody, and I will tell you all about it."

In a semicircle in front of the fireplace they sat, and all turned wondering eyes toward Gertrude and Adele who had called the meeting.

"There has recently come to our school," Della began, "a young girl who might be very pretty were it not for a fretful and perhaps unhappy expression. In fact she has

been here two weeks and I have not seen her smile once."

"Poor thing!" Carol Lorens exclaimed.  
"Are you speaking of Katrina Mason?"

"Yes, that is her name," Adele replied, then turning to Gertrude she added, "You tell what Madame Deriby wishes us to do."

"Yesterday I was in the office making my weekly report," the older girl began, "when Madame Deriby said, 'Gertrude, I am much troubled about our new pupil Katrina. She has been brought up by a wealthy and idolizing mother who has gratified her every wish. Realizing, perhaps too late, that she was spoiling her daughter, that mother has sent her to us, but unfortunately she is discontented and wishes to return to her home. You girls from Sunnyside have such pleasant times, I wish you would confer together and plan some way, if you can, to make Katrina happier.'"

"That will be a hard task," Peggy Pierce said. "She is in one of my classes and when Miss Sharpleigh tried to insist upon

Katrina's reciting, she stamped her foot and replied angrily that she had never been made to do anything against her will, and that she most certainly would not recite unless she wanted to."

"Poor little wild thing, she seems almost untamable," Evelyn Dartmoor said pityingly. "Adele, have you and Gertrude thought of a plan?"

"If the rest of you agree, I had thought it might be well to select one of us to call upon Katrina in her room this morning and perhaps invite her to join us this afternoon in some merry-making. Madame Deriby would grant us permission to do whatever we would wish."

"Oh-h! Don't choose me!" Betty Burd begged. "I said good-morning real pleasant-like to Katrina only yesterday and she tossed her head and walked past in the rudest manner."

"When I was a little girl," Doris Drexel began, "we used to say a rhyme and point at each child in the ring to see who would be

it. That would be a good way to select the one who is to call upon Katrina."

"You repeat the rhyme then," Gertrude suggested, and so Doris began,—

"Rosies, posies, violets so blue,  
Somebody must be it  
And that somebody is *you*."

"Poor Carol is the victim!" Betty Burd said sympathetically.

The slender, pretty girl at whom Doris was pointing sprang up as she exclaimed brightly, "I have nothing to do right this very minute and so I will begin at once to try to tame little Katrina. Let us meet here at the ten o'clock rest period and I will report results."

"That will give me time to do my piano practice," Doris declared as she arose. The girls then went about their different tasks, each wondering what the outcome of the visit would be.

On leaving the others Carol Lorens did not go at once to Katrina. She first slipped

into her own room, and finding no one there, she went to her dresser and lifted a picture in a silver frame and gazed at it tenderly. The sweet face of her mother looked out at her.

"Mummie," she said softly, "how would you go about it if you had to tame Katrina?"

"With loving kindness!" the thought flashed to Carol. Once her mother had told her that those two words linked together were all the creed of which one had need. Replacing the photograph, the girl went with a light heart to the west wing and tapped on the door of the most luxurious room in the school.

"Come in!" a fretful voice called in reply to her knock. The girl curled on the window-seat was reading a book and she did not even glance up when the door opened.

"Miss Mason, am I intruding?" Carol asked pleasantly as she entered the room.

Katrina turned and looked surprised. "Oh!" she said, "I supposed it was a maid. Be seated if you want to."

Betty was right. The girl was deliberately rude, but Carol would not leave until she had at least tried the power of loving kindness.

"Miss Mason," she began, "perhaps you have heard that just before Christmas we are to give a play, and I was wondering if you would like to take part. I am on the committee for selecting the actors," she added with her friendliest smile.

Katrina tossed her head as she replied haughtily, "Well, I certainly do not care for a servant's part, and I am told that is the only one that is not taken."

Carol knew that this was true. "How would you like to be one of the summer girls?" she asked. "That was to have been my part, but I will gladly let you have it. In fact, I would rather enjoy being Norah. It's such fun trying to speak the Irish brogue." Then, taking from her pocket a folded paper, she handed it to the astonished girl as she said, "These are the lines that you would have to speak. I copied them on

a typewriter and they will not be hard to learn. Rosamond, Doris, and Betty are the other summer girls. I am sure you will like that part."

"Thank you!" Katrina heard herself saying. She found it hard to be rude to Carol. Then she added impulsively, "Miss Lorens, I have watched you and your friends often. You seem to be so happy all together, but none of the girls here like me. They think I am just horrid!" again the fretful expression in the face, which, for a moment, had been truly pretty.

"If you wish them to like you," Carol began, "you might try loving kindness."

Katrina looked puzzled. "But how?" she asked curiously.

The visitor smiled. "Isn't there something nice that you could do for the girls? I am sure that if they knew that you wanted to be friends, they would be willing to come more than half-way."

After a thoughtful moment, Katrina looked up with a smile. "I might share the

box of goodies which Mother sent me for my Thanksgiving treat," she said. "Do you suppose they would like that?"

"Oh, that will be a splendid way," Carol exclaimed joyously, "and now let's plan how you are to do it."

At the ten o'clock rest period Carol skipped into Adele's room where her friends were all eagerly awaiting her.

"Well, did you tame Katrina?" Betty Burd inquired.

Carol's face was shining. "I do believe that Katrina is as nice as she can be underneath," she said; then she added with a twinkle, which she tried to hide, "at any rate she is tamed enough to wish us to call upon her at five this afternoon. Now, girls, when we make this call, I want you all to act as though you *really* liked Katrina, and that will help you to like her, I am sure."

"We will do just as you say," Doris Drexel replied in a doleful tone, "but I am

quite sure that we are going to be dreadfully bored."

A happy surprise awaited the girls.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### AN UNEXPECTED SPREAD

CAROL, upon leaving Katrina's room, went at once to the office and Madame Deriby gladly granted the permission which was requested.

The matron was sorry indeed for the fretful, discontented girl, and she believed that the wholesome, happy maidens from Sunnyside would be the best companions that she could possibly have.

At the hour of five Carol again entered Apple-Blossom Alley and found the others waiting for her to escort them to "Iceland," as Peggy Pierce called Katrina's room.

"Now remember," their leader warned, "every one is to be just as charming as she knows how."

"We'll promise!" Doris Drexel declared.

"Now, let the procession proceed. If we must call upon a young tigress, let's get it over as soon as possible."

Into the west wing they trooped and Carol tapped upon a closed door which was thrown open at once. There stood a pretty girl who was welcoming them in a manner truly gracious. Bettykins wanted to rub her eyes to make sure that she was awake. This could not possibly be the Katrina whom they had so disliked, but Adele understood. She realized that Carol had also suggested to the hostess that she welcome her guests as though she really liked them.

"Katrina," Carol was saying, "permit me to introduce to you Adele Doring, a maiden fair, whose name will one day be known from ocean to ocean as a poetess of great renown. She can rhyme cat and rat without the slightest effort, and this next maiden with the short golden curls and the cheeks that a peach would envy, is Rosamond Wright, famous for having made tatting of seven varieties. And these two

whose arms are linked are the Inseparables, by name Doris Drexel and Peggy Pierce. It doesn't matter which is which, for each comes when the other is called, and this tall young lady with a solemn air and spectacles is our mathematician, Bertha Angel, and this youngster with the brown braids and a dimple is our youngest, known either as 'Little One' or Betty Burd. Gertrude Willis couldn't come, because she has taken the baby class to the woods, and Evelyn Dartmoor has gone to Buffalo to spend the weekend with her grandfather. Otherwise, we of the Sunnyside Club are all present."

"Oh, Carol!" Adele laughed, "did you say all that in one breath? I am sure we feel very much honored, but, Katrina, don't you believe a word that she says about us."

"I won't!" Katrina smilingly replied. "I'll find out for myself. Now be seated anywhere. I think that there are chairs enough and five of you can sit on the window-seat."

Rosamond dropped into the easiest chair

and the others curled up here and there while Carol announced, "Girls, I have brought all of the parts for the play, and I thought it would be fun to read them over to just get an idea when our turns come in."

The play was an amusing one and this informal rehearsal caused much merriment and laughter, and, before any one realized that an hour had passed, the get-ready-for-supper bell was ringing in the corridor.

Bertha stood up. "We ought to go now," she announced, but Carol said mysteriously, "No, not yet. Just sit ever so still and see what is going to happen."

The visitors looked surprised but did as they were told. Some of them had noticed that one corner of the room was screened in a manner which suggested that something was being hidden, but they had thought little of it until Katrina and Carol removed the screens and revealed a table laden with good things to eat.

"Ohee!" squealed the irrepressible Betty

Burd. "Girls, aren't you glad that you were invited?"

"Suppose you all sit on the floor now in a circle," Carol suggested, "and then Katrina and I will pass the feast."

Katrina, who had always had a maid to wait upon her, actually enjoyed the novel experience of serving her guests.

Suddenly she thought of something. "Oh, Adele," she exclaimed, "don't you suppose that your friend Gertrude Willis would be free and could join us now?"

Adele, who had been wishing that Gertrude was with them, sprang up as she said, "I am sure Trudie would love to come. I will go and find her."

Gertrude, who had heard nothing about the taming of Katrina, was in the south wing wondering where all the girls could be, and she gladly accompanied Adele back to the party, where she was graciously received by the beaming hostess.

On the floor they all sat in a big circle, and to each was given a plate heaped with

cold turkey and cranberry jelly. Potato chips, olives, candy, frosted cookies, a huge chocolate-cake, and grape-juice completed the feast.

Rosamond Wright was just about to begin on an olive when she surprised them all by exclaiming, "Katrina, I just can't eat a bite of your party until I tell you that I am sorry that I haven't been nicer to you."

And Katrina replied simply, "Rosamond, I was just thinking that the fault must have been mine. You see when I was little, I was a spoiled child, and I never smiled except when things happened to please me. It seems easy enough to be cheerful to-day, while you all are here, but to-morrow I may forget."

Carol laid a loving hand on the girl's arm as she said, "We want you to be with us often, Katrina, and you will be, because we are to have rehearsals for the play every day now at the four-thirty recreation."

And so was completed the taming of Katrina.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### A THANKSGIVING DINNER PARTY

“WHERE are you, girls?” Adele called one crisp November day as she whirled down Apple-Blossom Alley and entered the corner room where many of her particular friends were assembled. They looked up eagerly at her entrance, and Betty, noting that her hands were behind her, exclaimed in little-girl fashion, “Oh, Della, what are you hiding? If it’s candy, I choose the right.”

“It’s better than candy,” Adele declared. “Do you all give up?”

“It’s a letter!” Peggy Pierce said mischievously.

“Oh, Peg, that isn’t fair! You peeked!” Adele protested, then bringing the missive around front, she added, “It was really sent to Gertrude, but she is busy with the baby class, so she asked me to read it to you. In

a thousand years you couldn't guess whom it is from or what is in it. Gertrude is delighted about it, and so am I."

"Della, you are so provoking! Please don't keep us 'suspended' this way, as Bob says," Rosamond pleaded. "Nothing exciting has happened in ever so long, not since we tamed Katrina."

"That was only last Saturday, and this is Wednesday," Adele replied merrily. "I'll give you a tiny hint. It's an invitation from a neighbor."

"Oho, I know then," Doris Drexel sang out, "for the only neighbor with whom we are any of us acquainted are those nice Ellsworths about whom you and Gertrude were telling us."

"Right you are, Dory dear! Now, lend me your ear and you shall hear!" Adele chanted as she sat on the rug tailorwise and unfolded the pale-blue sheet of note-paper.

"**MY DEAR MISS GERTRUDE AND MISS ADELE:**  
she read—

"Ever since you were here, I have

been wondering how I can thank you both for the great happiness that you have brought into my life. Words are inadequate to express my gladness, and I want you to come over and see for yourself how joyous is the little girl whose welfare you had so much at heart. If Madame Deriby is willing, I would like you to dine with us on Thanksgiving Day."

"Oh-h!" moaned Betty Burd, "I thought it was going to be an invitation for all of us."

"So it is!" Adele said brightly. "I haven't finished reading." Then she continued:

"Our table will accommodate twenty, and, as there will only be six of us, will you kindly extend my invitation to your friends from Sunnyside?"

"If Madame Deriby consents, we should be pleased to have you come at two and spend the afternoon on Thursday.

"Your most grateful friend,  
"LOUISE ELLSWORTH."

"Oh, what glorious fun that will be!" Peggy Pierce exclaimed. "It will give us a chance to wear our pretty party-dresses."

Mine is blue and brand new and I am wild to appear in it."

The other girls were equally glad, but they had no time to express their pleasure, for at that moment a gong was calling them to their classes.

Madame Deriby's permission was readily obtained, and Betty Burd declared that she just knew that she wouldn't sleep a wink, but the next morning Adele had to throw a pillow to awaken the little maiden.

"Betty!" she called. "You can't guess what's going to happen to-day!"

Their youngest rubbed her eyes, and then, leaping out of bed, she pirouetted about gaily while the older girls begged her to watch out for pins.

Thanksgiving Day had dawned golden and bright, and the girls were so excited that the morning hours seemed to drag, but at last the noon repast was over and they flocked to Apple-Blossom Alley to deck themselves in their prettiest finery.

At one o'clock many of them, with completed toilets, were in the corner room admiring one another and bubbling over with joyous anticipation, when there came a knock at the door.

"Peg, please open it!" Adele was busily fastening Betty's hardest hooks.

It was Marie, the maid, carrying a long, large box. "For Miss Gertrude," she said with a smile.

"Oh, Trudie, who do you suppose has been sending you flowers?" exclaimed Rosamond, the romantic.

"I can't guess, but we will soon know," the other said brightly as she snipped the yellow cord.

"Oh! Oh! What pretty, curly chrysanthemums!" Doris Drexel cried. "Here's a little envelope, Trudie," she added, lifting it from the blossoms and handing it to the older girl.

"They are from Arthur Ellsworth for all of us!" Gertrude said. "How nice it was of him to send them. You know, one always

wears a chrysanthemum on Thanksgiving Day."

"There's something on the back of the card, Trudie, and you didn't read it."

"Suppose you read it then, Bettykins." Gertrude was separating the flowers and giving one to each maiden, so Betty read:

*"At the hour of three  
A surprise there will be!"*

"How exciting!" Peggy Pierce exclaimed as she whirled about gleefully.

"Here comes Patrick up the drive. Get on your hats and cloaks, everybody," Adele announced. "It's time to go!"

Little Alise was eagerly watching out of the wide front window in the library, and, when she saw the school bus turn in at the drive, she exclaimed joyously:

"Oh, Auntie Louise, here comes big sister Gertrude. Let's you and I open the door."

Miss Ellsworth, whose new happiness was shining in her face, nodded a dismissal to the maid who had come to answer the call of the knocker, and she and Alise greeted the merry girls.

Then the laughing, chattering child, holding fast to Gertrude's hand, led them up the curving stairway to a beautiful upper room, where they were to lay aside their wraps.

Then down they trooped, looking, so thought the lady who stood waiting in the hall below, like a flock of daintily colored butterflies.

There was a big log cheerily burning on the wide hearth, around which comfortable chairs had been drawn. Miss Ellsworth bade them be seated and for a time they talked together, little Alise, with her excited happy chatter, preventing the occasion from being a formal one.

Rosamond, remembering what had been written on the back of the card among the flowers, looked often at the clock, and, when it was five minutes to three, she glanced

meaningly at the girls nearest her, and indeed they were all wondering what the surprise was to be. Just as the bells in a beautiful marble clock were chiming the hour, a door at one side of the fireplace opened, and Arthur Ellsworth entered. He was followed by three other young men who were rather peculiar-looking, as each had long, dark hair and a heavy, drooping mustache. Arthur introduced the newcomers, but their names were so difficult to pronounce that the girls decided that these friends of their host must all be Russians.

Miss Ellsworth took this occasion to slip away to attend to some matter pertaining to the dinner and Alise went with her.

Arthur then asked the girls if they would like to see the gallery which adjoined the library. Rosamond found herself walking by the side of one of the supposed Russians, who seemed to be strangely silent. Believing that he must be very shy, Rose said, "Mr. Mellowisky, your name is such a long one that I am not sure that I have it right."

Then, not knowing what else to say, she inquired, "Is this your first visit to Linden?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle, it is!" was the reply. The girl was puzzled. Surely she had heard that voice before. She turned and looked intently at her companion and saw a pair of blue eyes twinkling with mischievous laughter.

"Bob Angel!" she cried. "If you had not spoken, I never should have recognized you, but you couldn't disguise a voice that I have heard ever since I was knee-high to a grasshopper."

How Bob laughed as he pulled off the wig and mustache. Adele, whirling about, clapped her hands merrily. "Oh, Rosie!" she exclaimed, "I recognized Jack the very first minute."

"And I did Bob," Bertha confessed, "but I didn't want to spoil the fun till Rosie found him out."

"Am I the only one to go unrecognized just because I haven't a sister?" the third young man asked dolefully.

"Oh, you are Donald Burnley!" Betty Burd exclaimed joyously. "Isn't this the best surprise that there ever could be?"

The ringing of musically toned Chinese gongs was calling them to the dining-room, and it was not until they were seated that the mystery was explained.

"I don't see how you happen to know our brothers, Mr. Ellsworth," Adele said, turning at once to Arthur.

"I went to school with them in Dorchester," that lad replied. "When you told me that you were from Sunnyside, I afterwards, in thinking of it, wondered if you were related to Jack Doring, and I wrote him to inquire. When I found that he and Bob both had sisters at Linden Hall, I decided, with Aunt Louise's permission, to invite them to our Thanksgiving party. Donald, being my particular pal, I also included, although you are none of you especially interested in him."

Peggy and Betty exchanged quick, twinkling glances, and Adele hurriedly led the

conversation in a safer direction, not knowing what those mischievous maidens might say.

After dinner the young people sang and danced until twilight brought Patrick and the bus. The girls thanked Miss Ellsworth for the delightful afternoon and each received a loving hug from little Alise.

The boys accompanied the guests back to the school, as Adele and Bertha were eager to introduce their nice brothers to Madame Deriby.

The matron was pleased with all four of the manly boys and invited them to visit the school whenever they wished.

Then, as they were to return on the evening train to Buffalo, Arthur drove them to the station in his car and the girls waved until they had disappeared.

“Well, that certainly was a happy surprise!” Adele declared when half an hour later the girls in their gaily colored kimonos were gathered in her room and sat around the fire to talk over the party.

"Do you know," Betty Burd suddenly exclaimed, "I think Arthur Ellsworth is the nicest boy, and I really believe that he particularly likes our beloved Gertrude."

"Bettykins, what an imagination you have!" the young teacher said, and then there was a chorus of merry good-nights, for the lights-out gong was sounding in the corridor.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### JUST SKIPPING ALONG

WHEN Thanksgiving was over, the girls from Sunnyside devoted many hours to earnest study preparing for the mid-year examinations that were to be held in December, but also there were frequent times of merry-making.

During the last week in November the snow came, and Bettykins, who had never outgrown her childish joy in it, gave a shout of delight when she awakened one Saturday and found the ground, trees and fences a sparkling white.

An hour later the older girls, standing in the library windows, laughed to see their youngest member taking an active part in a lively game of snowballing with the small primary pupils.

Then, one day there came another invitation from their kind neighbors, the Ellsworths, and this time every girl at Linden Hall was invited. It was an old-fashioned sleigh-ride party and Farmer O'Rourke appeared with his lumber-wagon on runners. In the bottom there was a soft, cushiony depth of clean straw.

Arthur Ellsworth followed with another roomy sleigh in which, smiling and bowing to the waiting girls, sat Miss Ellsworth and little Alise.

Such a merry ride they had up-hill and down, tooting upon horns that Arthur had provided, and ending at the mansion-like home of Elmhurst. There in the spacious library, a huge log snapped and sparkled on the wide hearth, and the forty-eight girls, slipping off their warm wraps, sat on the chairs, floor, everywhere, and were helped by Arthur and a maid to steaming chocolate and delicious sandwiches.

Little Alise, hopping among them like a fairy, announced that this was her very own

party, and Miss Ellsworth, smiling at the little girl whom she so loved, agreed. "Yes, this is Alise's birthday, and when I asked whom she would like to invite to a party, she replied that she wanted all of the nice girls at Linden Hall."

A week after this jolly affair, rehearsals on the play were begun in real earnest, and Katrina, who now laughed as often as the others, made a very graceful and pretty summer girl, but, when at last the evening arrived, it was Carol's truly amusing impersonation of an Irish maid that sent the delighted audience into gale after gale of laughter. When it was all over, she was presented with a huge bouquet of pink carnations tied with wide green ribbons.

"Well, it's certainly a good thing that I was too snobbish to take that part," Katrina exclaimed when every one had surged up and congratulated the beaming maid. "The play wouldn't have been a success at all without you as Norah."

Carol gave this little maiden a friendly

hug and then darted away to take off the wig and paint.

Midwinter exams were not so dreadful after all, and each dweller of Apple-Blossom Alley emerged from them with high marks, and then satchels were packed and away they went to their homes for the holidays.

The "Jolly Pirates" were at the station to meet the train when it pulled into Sunnyside, and after much laughter and joyous greetings, the several sleighs in waiting bore the girls away to their homes and devoted families.

A round of gay times had been planned to entertain them, and almost before they realized that it was possible, they were back in Linden Hall and again at their studies.

"Girls!" Adele cried one day as she skipped into Apple-Blossom Alley, "I am possessed of a sudden and soaring ambition. I have decided to compete for the French essay medal which is awarded by Madame Vandeheuton every year on the first day of February."

"Oh, Della, you'd have to study terribly hard to win that. Marie Le Clerc is also trying for it, and she is of French descent," Betty Burd declared.

"'Nothing venture, nothing have,'" Doris Drexel chanted.

"'Work, work, and then work some more,' was a certain author's rule for gaining success," Bertha Angel told them. "Your ambition is a laudable one, my dear friend Adele, and I will lend you my assistance by hearing you recite your verbs."

"'It is better to fail than never to try,'" Carol laughingly added. "Doesn't some one else know a suitable adage?"

"'Failures are stepping-stones to success,'" Evelyn Dartmoor chimed in, and the cheerful expression in her beautiful face would have delighted her grandfather could he have seen it, but he knew from her letters that she was finding happiness in the companionship of Carol.

But when the contest took place, it was won, as Betty had prophesied, by Marie Le

Clerc. Adele sincerely congratulated the winner and greatly admired the medal, which had come from France, and secretly determined to try again next year if she chanced to be at Linden Hall. Her own essay won second place and honorable mention in the school archives.

The next exciting event was the birthday of Gladys Merle Jones, who received a goodly check from her adoring father, and that maiden, wishing to share it with the others, obtained Madame Deriby's permission to have a theater-party in Buffalo, to which she invited all the pupils and the faculty.

The request was granted, and the girls spent a wonderful afternoon in one of the most beautiful of theaters and returned bearing with them refreshments for an evening spread.

March came in wild and blustering, and with it a new pupil arrived at Linden Hall. She was of so unusual a type that she greatly interested the girls from Sunnyside.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### THE OLD-FASHIONED PUPIL

“GIRLS, did any of you see the new pupil?” Carol Lorens asked when the dwellers of Apple-Blossom Alley had gathered in Adele’s room one wild March afternoon.

“I haven’t seen her,” Doris Drexel replied, as she curled up on the rug in front of the fireplace where a log was snapping merrily. “What does she look like and where has she come from?”

“I can answer one of those questions,” Peggy Pierce declared, “for I just this moment saw her in the lower hall standing near Madame Deriby’s door as though she were waiting to be admitted, and truly, she is the queerest-looking girl that I have ever seen outside of a picture-book. She had on a plaid shawl and a beaver cap and, think of it, girls, she was wearing thick woolen mit-

tens and her skirt was skimpy and much too short, for she is almost as tall as Gertrude. She must be a new pupil, though, for an old battered suit-case was on the floor beside her. I suppose that I stared at her rather curiously and she actually looked frightened. I guess that she isn't used to seeing other girls, for surely there is nothing scary about me, is there?"

"Of course not, Peggy," Rosamond Wright replied indignantly. "I certainly can't see why such a countrified girl is coming to Linden Hall Seminary, which is supposed to be a select school for the daughters of the gentry."

"Well, don't let's decide about this girl until we know her," Adele had just said, when there came a tap on the door followed by the appearance of Gertrude Willis, who was gladly welcomed by all. Peggy Pierce sprang up from the easiest chair and offered it to the newcomer.

"Oh, Peg, do keep your comfortable seat," the older girl urged with her winning smile.

"Truly I feel much more at home on the floor," the other maiden replied as she sat down tailor-fashion by her chum Doris.

"I can't stay but a moment," Gertrude said. "Madame Deriby wishes me to come to her office at four-thirty. We have a new pupil, it seems, who is unused to the ways of girls, and Madame Deriby wishes me to meet her and take her under my wing, so to speak."

"Oh," moaned Doris Drexel, "I know what that will mean. You will have to spend all your free time coaching her, and we won't see anything of you, and if it's that gawky country girl Peggy has just been telling us about, you won't find much pleasure in her company, I'm sure of that."

"Well, girls," Gertrude said brightly as she arose, "you remember that one of the mottoes that we chose for our Sunnyside Club was, 'The only creed of which we have need is the art of being kind.' "

"You are right!" Adele exclaimed. "I am afraid that we do forget sometimes."

Bring the new pupil back with you and we will all help to make her feel at home."

Then, when Gertrude was gone, the girls took out their mending, and tongues and needles flew, while they wondered what the new girl would be like.

Half an hour later there came a tap on the door and Adele sprang up to open it. Gertrude smilingly entered, leading by the hand a young stranger whose dress was too short in skirt and sleeve, as though she had long since outgrown it. Her face was tanned by sun and wind and her dark hair was tightly braided, and, as Peggy had said, there was an almost startled look in the big brown eyes that were unusually beautiful and expressive.

The girls about the fireplace arose to greet the newcomer.

"This is Matilda Perkins," Gertrude said kindly. "She has come to be one of our Linden Hall family." Then, turning to the stranger, she added in her friendliest man-

ner, "Matilda, I am not going to tell you the names of these eight maidens just at first, but you will quickly learn them. Suppose you and I occupy the window-seat. Oh, girls," she chatted on, "I do believe that I smell pop-corn. Did you pop some while I was away and eat it all up?"

"We did pop it while you were away," Betty Burd agreed, "but we saved every kernel of it to share with you and Matilda." Then, opening the closet door, she brought forth a big Chinese bowl brimming over with fluffy white kernels.

"Cup your two hands, everybody!" Betty then sang out. "You may each have all that they will hold." Sewing had to be abandoned for a time and the girls purposely chatted together that the newcomer might become used to them and their ways. Glancing at her a few moments later, Adele was glad to see that the startled expression had vanished from those wonderful brown eyes and that instead they were twinkling with amusement.



"THIS IS MATILDA PERKINS."—*Page 161.*



The girls, although they said little to Matilda directly, included her in a general way as they talked about exams only a week ahead, and at last, when Marie, the maid, rapped and told them that Madame Deriby was now ready to receive the new pupil in her office, that girl arose and said without a trace of her former shyness, "Thank you all for the pleasant time," and then she was gone.

As soon as they were sure that Matilda was out of hearing, Peggy Pierce tiptoed over to the door and locked it. Then she said, "Now, Gertrude, do tell us all you know about her. She certainly is a new type of girl to me."

"Well," Gertrude began, "even Madame Deriby does not as yet know much about Matilda. She told me that about two weeks ago she received a letter from an old friend of hers, Bishop Wesley. His sister went to school with Madame Deriby in France, and they are still devoted friends. Now and then the good Bishop has sent a pupil to

Linden Hall, but it has always been a girl from a home of wealth and refinement, and so when the Bishop wrote that he would like to send another little friend of his, Madame Deriby replied that she would gladly receive Matilda even though the rooms are really all taken. Of course she was expecting a pupil of the type that the Bishop usually sent, but when she saw this countrified girl, Madame Deriby, who is kindness personified, said that for a moment she was puzzled to know what to do, for the only bed unoccupied is in the room of that English girl who came at Christmas, the one who considers herself too good to associate with any of us."

The others gasped and Rosamond asked, "Gertrude, do you mean that this back-woodsy girl with that awful name, Matilda Perkins, is to room with the snobbish Lady Stuckup?"

Trudy nodded, and Peggy, whose bump of mischief and merriment seemed sometimes to be more prominent than her bump of sympathy, laughingly declared, "Girls, it would

be as good as a circus to see them when they first meet."

"Oh, Peggy, how can you speak that way?" Adele remonstrated. "I just know that it is going to be ever so hard for both of them."

"I'm sure that I don't care how uncomfortable that English girl is made," Doris Drexel remarked. "Carol overheard her saying that she thinks it is dreadful because there are no class distinctions in America. She was telling Miss Merritt that there isn't one pupil attending Linden Hall who would be in her class in England."

"Well, then, why doesn't she go back to her native land?" Peggy inquired. "No one is begging her to stay here that I know of."

"Her father is traveling in the West, Madame Deriby told me," Evelyn replied. "He will soon come after her, and then she will leave our plebeian shores forever."

"Girls!" Adele suddenly exclaimed with enthusiasm, "Matilda Perkins may be coun-

trified, but there is something about those wonderful eyes of hers that makes me feel sure that she can hold her own even with Peggy's Lady Stuckup, but, Gertrude, you haven't told us where Matilda came from. Have you heard as yet?"

"She hails from the Dakota prairies," the older girl replied. "Her mother was a well-educated woman who married a ranchman and she taught her little girl and her two boys as best she could, but, when Matilda was twelve, she and her brothers became orphans, and since that time she has kept house for them and helped on the farm, but, Adele, if you want to see Matilda's eyes glow, you must hear her tell about her prairie home. I will bring her up here this evening, if Madame Deriby will excuse us from the recreation hour in the hall."

Then she added, springing up, "There's the get-ready-for-supper bell. I must hunt up Matilda this very minute or she will be losing herself in the maze of corridors."

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### THE PRAIRIE HOME

THAT evening at seven, as Gertrude had suggested, the dwellers of Apple-Blossom Alley gathered in Adele's room and Matilda Perkins was with them. Her skirt and sleeves were still skimpy and short but the frightened expression had vanished from her beautiful brown eyes which seemed to mirror her every thought.

"Let's sit in a circle on the floor," Adele said as she threw fresh wood on the fire. "It's heaps cosier, and Bettykins, turn the light low, for the blaze is bright enough."

"Matilda, you sit in the middle," Doris Drexel suggested, "because you are to be the story-teller to-night. That is if you will be," she added, smiling at the new pupil. "You see, we are very eager to hear about your Dakota home."

For a moment a soft, dreamy expression appeared in the eyes that held such a fascination for Adele. "I love my prairie home," Matilda said almost wistfully, "but I did want to leave it, for it was my mother's wish that I should come East and have a good education."

"What is a prairie like?" Peggy asked as Matilda paused.

"Oh, it's wonderful," the strange girl replied, turning toward the speaker eyes that fairly glowed. "There's a wide stretch as far as you can see of waving wheat and corn, golden in the sunlight, with here and there clumps of bright-colored flowers. Black-birds, with shining, purple-black coats, spring up in a flock when you walk in the corn, and, too, there are meadow-larks and orioles, but that is only in the summer. In the winter there are blizzards that drive fiercely across the plain and the snow piles so high that often I do not leave the house for weeks, except now and then to go to the sod buildings where the chickens and cattle

are kept. As soon as they can, the boys dig tunnel-like paths to each outhouse and then they shovel the snow away from the windows so that I can have daylight for my work. It was during those snowed-in weeks that I did most of my studying. I had a queer library of my own, perhaps you will think. It contained very few books, and they were the Bible, 'Ivanhoe,' 'Nicholas Nickleby,' 'Cranford,' 'Little Women,' 'Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm,' 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,' and the almanac, besides the text-books that were used in the country school. I read them over and over on my long shut-in days and evenings, and then sometimes when the boys were away, I would curl up by the fire and listen to the wind that shook the house and wonder if there would ever be anything different. Then, last winter we had a very exciting adventure in a blizzard, and it brought me great good fortune."

"Oh, do tell us about it, please!" Adele implored.

Matilda Perkins had often told stories aloud when she was a little girl on the prairie. Sometimes her audience had been only her dog, Shep, or again a row of corn-stalks that she pretended were children, but to-night, for the first time in her fifteen years, she was called upon to tell a story to real girls of about her own age. The eager interest plainly seen in the nine pairs of eyes turned toward her swept away the last vestige of her shyness and she told the story as simply and as dramatically as she would have done had she been telling it to Shep or to the cornstalks.

"Winter was half spent," she said, "and we were beginning to think that perhaps there would not be a long, severe blizzard that year, when one afternoon Brother Basil came in from the sod-house where we kept the smoked meat with a heavy ham over his shoulders.

"'Thought I'd better lay in a good supply,' he explained. 'Looks pretty threatening over toward the west. Shouldn't

wonder if we had a blizzard before night.'

"‘I think you’re a good weather-prophet,’ Brother Cedric said as he threw more twisted straw on the fire. We don’t use wood on the prairie, you know, because there isn’t any wood to use. In the late fall, when there is little farm work to be done, we spend hours twisting straw into hard knots, and this we store away for winter use.

"‘Well,’ I said as cheerfully as I could, ‘if the blizzard is coming, we’ll have to let it. We’ll be snug enough in here. I have heaps of potatoes back of the stove and there’s plenty of twisted straw.’

"Then I asked Cedric to light the lanterns that were hanging from the rafters overhead. Basil sliced the meat and soon I had supper cooking. It was growing colder every minute, and before we had finished, we heard a mournful sound in the distance, which made me shudder, though the room was warm.

"In another moment a blast of wind

shook the house, and though it was still late afternoon, it suddenly grew very dark. We heard the cattle bellowing with fright above the shrieking of the oncoming storm. For hours it raged and though we could not see it, we knew that the snow was falling heavily.

“‘Hang a lantern in the window,’ I said to Basil. ‘If any one happens to be out in this storm, he may be able to find his way to our house.’

“Cedric shook his head. ‘If there’s any one out in this blizzard,’ he said, ‘heaven help him, for mere man could not.’

“Now, it was right at this moment that I was sure that I heard a voice calling. ‘What was that?’ I asked, listening intently.

“‘Nothing but the wind,’ Basil replied. There was indeed something almost human about the shrieking of the wind, but I was not satisfied.

“I put my ear to the crack of the door and listened. Then I beckoned to Basil and

said, ‘I am sure that I hear some one calling for help.’

“ My younger brother was convinced that he, too, heard, and without saying a word, he put on his greatcoat and started for the door.

“ Cedric tried to hold him back. ‘ This is foolishness! ’ he cried. ‘ You couldn’t help any one who might be out in this blizzard. Why risk your own life? ’

“ ‘ If I were the one out there, I’d want somebody to try to save me,’ was all that my brave brother said. Then he opened the door and went out. Our dog Shep bounded after him. The cutting sleet and wind blew in our faces and we had to push with all our strength to close the door again.

“ For a moment Cedric, my older brother, paced up and down the room, and then, with a face sternly set, he whirled about and exclaimed, ‘ Sister, I can’t stand by and let Basil risk his life alone. I’m the oldest and the one who should have gone. Dad told me that I was to take his place when he died, so

I must go and bring Basil back.' While he was talking, he put on his slicker and beaver cap, and again the door opened and closed, and I was left alone. I took the other lantern down from the rafters and hung it in the south window. Then I threw more twisted straw on the fire and filled the kettle that there might be plenty of boiling water when the boys came back. Suddenly I was terrorized, for the thought had come to me that perhaps they would never come back.

"Then I happened to glance at our mother's picture standing on the mantel beside the Bible that she had given to me, and somehow I felt comforted, and I thought:

"'Surely God will not let my brothers perish when they have gone on an errand of mercy.'

"It seemed hours to me, but it really had not been long, when above the shrieking of the storm I heard the barking of Shep. I ran to the door and opened it wide, caring nothing for the wind and sleet that swept into the room.

"I peered out into the darkness, hoping, fearing. Was the faithful dog coming home alone? No, for I saw a figure, two of them, and they were carrying a third. In another moment they were inside, the seemingly lifeless form had been placed on the lounge and Basil helped me close the door.

"The stranger whom they carried was rather elderly, with iron-grey hair. His eyes were closed and he looked so white that I thought he must be dead, but Cedric and Basil were convinced that this was not so.

"They rubbed his hands and face with snow and I prepared a hot drink to give him as soon as he recovered. At last he opened his eyes and smiled. Such a kindly face he had.

"The boys helped him to Father's arm-chair, which always stood near the fire, and I wrapped him in a blanket and gave him the drink.

"When this was finished, he said, 'Well, little daughter and big sons, you have saved

my life and risked your own, than which a man can do nothing nobler.' Then he told us that he was a bishop and that he had been visiting on the Sioux reservation. He had heard that there was discontent among the tribe and he knew that he could do much toward restoring peace.

"'My pilgrimage had been a successful one,' the Bishop ended, 'but not being familiar with the signs of your sky, I ventured away unwisely.'

"The next day the storm had passed and the prairie was covered with glistening snow.

"When the good Bishop learned that the boys were working hard and saving so that they might send me East to school, the kind man said, 'Lads, I want to do something to prove my gratitude. Let me do this.'

"And that is why I am here at Linden Hall," Matilda ended simply.

The girls had been listening with breathless attention. "What an interesting story that was!" Doris Drexel declared. "I

am as glad as I can be that you have come to our school."

The new pupil, knowing that the speaker was sincere, smiled, and there was a happy light in her beautiful brown eyes as she said :

"I want to thank you all for welcoming me so kindly. I know that I must look queer," she added, glancing down at her old-fashioned dress, "but you see we do not have dressmakers out on the prairie, and I had no mother to help me."

Adele sprang to her feet as she exclaimed : "Stand up, Matilda. I want to see how tall you are."

Wonderingly the girl arose and stood by Adele, who said brightly, "Trudie, aren't we very near of a size?"

"Yes, Della, I think that you are," her friend replied.

"Good!" the other exclaimed. Then darting to her closet, she brought out her best uniform. "I won't need to wear this until Sunday, and, let me see, this is Wednesday;

Miss Perring, who makes our uniforms, can finish yours by that time. I am going to loan you this, Matilda, and I want you to put it on this very minute before you meet your new roommate, the haughty Geraldine Barrington. She won't be nice to you, however you look, but at least she cannot say that your dress is not up-to-date, for this is the very newest uniform in the school."

Matilda was almost overcome with her gratitude, but before she could speak, Adele had dragged her behind a screen and was helping her with the buttons.

A few moments later the other girls were amazed at the transformation that had been wrought, for Adele had also loosened the pretty hair which had been braided so tightly. She stood off and gazed at the new pupil with admiration.

"There now!" she said. "You look just like the rest of us, all except your eyes, and honestly, Matilda, though I don't want to make you vain, I've never met such eyes before in my travels, and I've been all the way

to Arizona and back. I've one thing more to say and that is, that your name does not fit you any better than your dress did. Should you mind if I call you something different?"

Matilda laughed. The shyness of a few hours ago was entirely gone and she laughed as freely and musically as she had done out on her wide prairie, when, with her dog Shep, she had raced through the cornfields.

"Call me whatever you like!" she said.

"Then I am going to name you Starr and spell it with a double-r."

When the retiring bell rang, Gertrude sprang up, saying, "Come, Starr, I will now introduce you to your roommate."

"I surely do pity you if you are to room with that Lady Stuckup," Doris Drexel declared.

"Oh, I don't mind," Starr replied brightly, "since you girls are kind to me, I shall not care how unkind she may be."

A truly unpleasant experience awaited this girl from the Dakota prairie.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### LADY STUCKUP

WHEN Gertrude Willis rapped on a closed door in the east wing, there was no response and so she turned the knob and entered the room which was unoccupied. Trudie then told the new pupil which was to be her side and bade her good-night.

When she was alone, Matilda stood looking out of the window into the darkness. For a moment a rush of loneliness swept over her heart. The stars seemed so faint and far away, while over the prairie they had seemed so near and brilliant. Then she smiled as she thought bravely, "I mustn't be homesick, for wonderful things are going to happen to me, and every one has been so kind."

Humming a little tune, the new pupil un-

packed her old-fashioned and much-battered suit-case, and a few moments thereafter she climbed into her bed.

Then the door opened and a tall, flaxen-haired girl entered. She might have been pretty had it not been for a haughty, disagreeable expression. She gave a disdainful glance toward the occupied bed and retired behind her sheltering screen.

Only that evening had she heard who was to be her roommate and she had been waiting until this late hour to see Madame Deriby, who had at last sent word that she could not see Geraldine until the morning. Long after Matilda, truly weary from her long journey, was peacefully sleeping, the haughty English girl lay awake planning what she would say to the matron. She, a Barrington, to be asked to share her room with a farmer's daughter. Such a slight was unbearable! If Madame Deriby did not know of her father's position in England, then his daughter would inform her at the very first opportunity.

Hours before the rising bell rang in the Linden Hall Seminary Matilda was awake, for out on her wide prairie every one was astir at early dawn. She did not want to disturb her roommate, the haughty Geraldine Barrington, and so she lay quietly gazing out of her window at the tree-tops and the shining sky, but she saw neither, except vaguely, for in fancy she was out on the prairie watching the sun rise, hearing the morning call of the meadow-larks and orioles and bobolinks. Even the harsh-voiced cowbirds and the thieving crows were there in her memoried picture, for they all meant home to her. She could see her brother Basil, the handsomest lad in all the world, she thought, as he swung into his saddle and herded the cattle down by the river.

Her older brother, Cedric, she knew would be swinging along after the plow with Shep bounding in front of the horses. Then, in imagination, she looked into the kitchen. She was sure that the boys found it hard to

keep house without her. For a moment a rush of regret brought tears to her eyes.

"Oh, how selfish I was to leave those dear brothers of mine with no one to get supper for them when they come home so tired at night."

The girl in the other bed had awakened and she heard a half-stifled sob from Matilda's corner. She curled her lips contemptuously. "Silly, sniffly thing," she said to herself. Then a bell rang, and they both arose and dressed behind their sheltering screens. Geraldine Barrington finished her toilet hastily and without one glance at the new pupil she swept out of the room.

Matilda smiled to herself. This girl had not the power to hurt her. Instead she thought happily of the kind friends whom she had met the day before, and when she went out into the corridor, one of these hurried forward to meet her. "Good-morning, Starr," Gertrude called. "I hope that you slept well."

"I did indeed, thank you," Matilda said

brightly. "Gertrude, you know the old saying, 'The dream you dream in a strange bed will come to pass some day.'"

"What was it?" Rosamond Wright asked as they joined the others at the entrance to Apple-Blossom Alley.

"It would be utterly impossible to have this dream come true," Starr replied merrily, "for I dreamed that Geraldine Barrington begged me to be her friend and roommate, while the truth of the matter is, she has not even given me a kindly glance, so you see dreams go by contraries."

While they were talking, the girls trooped down the broad front stairs. The matron in the lower hall smiled a greeting to them. The girls curtsied and chorused, "Good-morning, Madame Deriby."

That good woman was pleased to see the Bishop's protégée so differently clad. She felt sure that one of the Sunnyside girls had loaned her a uniform.

"I am glad that they are kind to poor Matilda," she thought as she turned into her

office, "for I am almost certain that her unfortunate roommate will not be."

As soon as the door was closed, there came a rap upon it and when Madame Deriby reopened it, she found an angry and indignant Geraldine Barrington standing outside.

"Come in," she said kindly, feeling almost sure that she knew what the visitor had to say, nor was she wrong.

"Madame Deriby," the girl began, "I wish to notify my father that I want to be removed from this school at once. In England I was never called upon to associate with any one in a class beneath me, and I certainly shall not begin doing so now. What would my friends at Barrington Manor think of me, if they knew that I was rooming with a girl named Matilda Jane Perkins, who wears a plaid shawl for a coat, a beaver cap for a hat, and thick woolly mittens instead of gloves. I had told you, Madame Deriby, that I did not care to make the acquaintance of any one here. My

father pays my tuition, not to have me humiliated, but in order that I may continue my education while he is obliged to be in the States."

The matron listened gravely to this indignant torrent of words and when the girl paused, she said not unkindly, "Be seated, Geraldine. I am sorry that you have been so distressed, and if there were a single unoccupied room in the school, I would gladly give it to you. It would be impossible for me to communicate with your father for the next two weeks, as he has informed me, and you, too, I believe, that he will be traveling on the desert and will not expect mail for a fortnight."

Geraldine tossed her head. "Well, if I am obliged to stay in this school for that long, I at least will not sleep in the same room with a farmer's daughter."

There was a sad expression in Madame Deriby's grey eyes. For a moment she was thoughtful and then she said: "There is a small room in the cupola which is unoccu-

pied. I will have it prepared and you may sleep there to-night if you prefer."

"I most certainly do prefer," the girl replied as she rose and left the office.

An hour later, when she returned to her room, planning to pack her trunk preparatory to having it moved to the cupola, she found Matilda seated in an easy-chair on her own side of the sunny bay-window. She held a pad and pencil and was writing a letter to her far-away brothers. The prairie girl heard the door open and some one enter, but, acting upon the advice of her counselors, she did not glance up, but continued her writing as though she were alone. Geraldine deliberately turned her back toward her roommate. Matilda glanced at the flaxen head and there was a sad expression in her wonderful eyes.

"Poor girl!" she thought. "How much happier she would be if she could forget that she is a Barrington and realize that really we are all of us just folks."

At that moment there came a rap on the

door and Peggy Pierce called, "Starr, are you there? We want you to come to Apple-Blossom Alley."

When Matilda was gone, Geraldine happened to glance at the writing-desk on the other side of the room. There she saw a small red book which was lying open as though it had recently been written in. The English girl would have scorned any one else who would have done a thing so dishonorable, but so great was her curiosity to know what this plebeian girl could have written in her diary that she deliberately locked the door and picking up the small book, she read: "March the 6th. Linden Hall is such a wonderful place and many of the girls have been so kind, especially Adele Doring and Gertrude Willis. My roommate, Geraldine Barrington, is the most beautiful girl in the school, or at least she would be if she had a pleasanter expression. She is very haughty and proud and the girls say that is probably because she is English, and yet my own dear mother was born in

England and lived there until she was seventeen and she was very kind to every one; but perhaps Mother did not belong to the haughty class. I am certainly glad that she did not, for they are not very pleasant to live with."

Geraldine tossed her head as she thought: "Well, I certainly agree that her mother did not belong to my class in England. I cannot imagine any one who would marry a Perkins associating with the Barringtons. She belonged to tradespeople or the serving class, no doubt. Perkins is the name of my chum's butler."

A door down the corridor opened and voices were heard approaching.

Geraldine quickly closed the book and slipped it back into its place on the desk.

She had just unlocked the door and seated herself when a flock of girls trooped into the room. They pretended not to see her though of course they did. She had whirled her chair about and her back was toward them.

"Oh, Starr, what a pretty room you

have," Peggy Pierce exclaimed as she sat on the window-seat and heaped the sofa pillows back of her. Geraldine flushed. Those were her very own pillows and she did not care to have them crushed, but she wisely decided to say nothing.

"Sit down, every one," Peggy called, "and let's tell Starr all about the rules of the school. It never would do to have her breaking them."

The girls sat on the floor, tailor-fashion, and from their twinkling eyes it could be plainly seen that a spirit of mischief possessed them.

"What would happen to me if I did break a rule?" Starr inquired.

Peggy lowered her voice to a stage whisper as she said, "Something dreadful, I can assure you. You would be sent to the cupola room, and there isn't any one of us brave enough to stay there all night."

Geraldine was of course listening, although she pretended to be reading. She knew that they were talking about the very

room which Madame Deriby had said that she might occupy that night.

"Why wouldn't one want to sleep there?" asked the innocent Starr.

"Because," Peggy replied in a hollow whisper, "that room is haunted. Some folks say they don't believe in ghosts, but they'd better sleep in the cupola for a few nights and see what they'll see, and hear what they'll hear. Nina Best had it last and she told Madame Deriby she just wouldn't sleep there another night. I don't know who is to have it next."

Peggy gave a mischievous sidelong glance at the back of Geraldine's head, but that girl pretended to be deeply interested in her book.

"Is there a story about the ghost?" Starr asked. "Tell it to us."

Luckily Peggy had an active imagination.

"Yes," she said in a hollow voice. "It was midnight when Nina was awakened by the creaking of her door. She knew that she had locked it before retiring. Fright-

ened, she sat up and flashed on the light. There was no one in the room and the door was closed and locked. Thinking that it might have been her imagination, she tried to sleep and was just dozing, when she heard stealthy, creeping steps coming across the floor. Again she flashed on the light and again there was no one there.

“Nina then decided to leave the light burning for company. After a time, as nothing had happened, she fell asleep, when suddenly she was awakened by a low moaning sound, the light went out and in the darkness she could see a white figure drifting toward her bed. She tried to move, but could not, and then an icy cold hand was laid on her forehead.

“Nina says that she screamed so loud that in another moment Miss Sharpleigh and Miss Merritt were at the door rapping to be let in. Nina was a nervous wreck the next day and left school to recuperate. I surely don’t envy the girl who is to have the cupola room next. For myself I would pre-

fer a flesh and blood roommate whoever she might be," Peggy concluded with a mischievous glance at Matilda.

Geraldine sprang up and taking her hat and coat she hurriedly left the room.

"Well, I guess I scared her ladyship enough," Peggy declared. "There wasn't a word of truth in what I was saying. I just made it up as I went along."

"Poor Geraldine!" Matilda laughed. "Now she will have to choose between a farmer's daughter and a ghost."

Just then a bell rang and Peggy leaped to her feet, declaring that it was her practice hour, and the other girls went with her.

When Matilda was alone, she stood for a moment looking out of the window. She saw a little wood in a shimmer of spring green down the hillside, and, since she had always lived on a prairie, she longed to know what a wood looked like.

"If only I had a hat and coat like other people," she thought, "I would take a walk by myself." Then she added wisely, "The

girls, whose friendship is worth having, do not care what I wear, and moreover, every one is busy at this hour, and no one will notice me." So thinking, she took her plaid shawl from the closet and twined it about her head and shoulders. Then she started out. She met no one in the corridors or garden and soon she reached the edge of the little wood. She stood for a moment looking about her truly awed. She had been brought up on a treeless prairie and this was the first time in her fifteen years that she had entered a wood. There was a shimmer of pale green on the twigs that would soon be in full leaf. The ground was moist and ferns were beginning to uncurl. A warm breeze wafted to Matilda an exquisite fragrance. Her wonderful eyes brightened. Surely there must be some wild flower in blossom, she thought, and eagerly she went deeper into the wood to find it. The hill became steeper and in places it was rocky. Again that exquisite fragrance and she paused to breathe deep of it. Then it was

that she spied something pink among the dry, brown leaves. Stooping, she found that loveliest of spring flowers, a clump of trailing arbutus.

"Oh, you sweet, sweet thing," she whispered as she held the blossoms close. "How I wish that I might find a spray for each of the girls who have been so kind to me." She continued her search, looking under the leaves. She was nearing a heap of rocks, when from the other side came a low moaning sound. Matilda stood very still and listened. Fear was unknown to this prairie girl, but for one fleeting second she recalled the story of Peggy's ghost. Then, when the sound was repeated, she hurried in that direction. Beyond a clump of bushes was the figure of a girl lying on the ground. Matilda saw that it was Geraldine Barrington. Forgetting everything but her desire to help, she hurried to the side of her roommate.

"Oh, Miss Barrington," she exclaimed, "you have hurt your ankle, haven't you?"

Let me get you into a more comfortable position and then I will run back to the school for assistance."

"I don't want to go back to the school," Geraldine declared angrily. "I have left that place forever. I was just on my way to the Linden Station when I slipped and wrenched my ankle. I was going to Buffalo on the next train and have Madame Deriby send my things."

"And all because you do not want to be my roommate," Matilda said sorrowfully. Then she added brightly, "I'll tell you what, Miss Barrington, let me help you back to the school and then I will ask Madame Deriby to permit me to move into the cupola and you shall have your room again all by yourself."

Geraldine looked up in surprise. She endeavored to rise but fell back with a groan. "Do lie still," Matilda urged. "I'll run down to the road. I see a farmer driving this way and I am sure that he will help us."

It proved to be kind Mr. O'Rourke on his



BEYOND WAS THE FIGURE OF A YOUNG GIRL LYING ON THE GROUND.  
—*Page 195.*



way to the seminary with the weekly supply of eggs and butter, and with his help Geraldine was carried to the wagon and made comfortable on the straw. Half an hour later, just as the girls were flocking out of the study hall, they were amazed to see no less a personage than Geraldine Barrington being helped into the school by a farmer and her hated roommate, Matilda Perkins, but the girls of Linden Hall were to hear of something much more surprising before the fortnight was over.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### A DREAM THAT CAME TRUE

THE resident nurse took charge of the case and Geraldine's ankle, which had been badly sprained, was carefully bandaged. When the pain had subsided, the girl fell into a light slumber and the nurse slipped away. Half an hour later Matilda stole into the room. She placed her exquisite spray of arbutus in a vase near Geraldine's bed, then she tiptoed over to her own side, and began to pack her belongings. Though she was very quiet, Geraldine, who was only drowsing, opened her eyes and the first thing that she saw was the arbutus. She well knew who had placed it there. The screen was in front of her bed so that she could not see Matilda, but she heard her tiptoeing about. She wondered what she could be doing. She was soon to learn, for in another moment she

saw the prairie girl going toward the door carrying all of her belongings. For the first time in her pampered life, Geraldine realized how selfish she had been.

"Miss Perkins," she heard herself saying.  
"Please don't move to-day."

In surprise Matilda placed her suit-case on the floor and went to the bedside. "But I thought that you wanted to leave the school because I was your roommate. I am only a farmer's daughter and of course you would not care to associate with me."

"Yes, I do," Geraldine declared, and there was a strange ring of sincerity in her voice. "I want to associate with you more than with any one else in the school."

"Then I will stay a few days longer," Matilda said quietly, "but when you are well perhaps you will feel as you did before. Just tell me so, won't you, and I will gladly move."

Turning back, she unpacked her suit-case and rehung the plaid shawl and beaver cap in the closet. Geraldine was amazed that

any one could be so unselfish, but a sudden twinge in her ankle kept her from replying.

That afternoon another girl in the school became ill and the nurse was obliged to spend nearly all of the time in the infirmary, and so Matilda asked permission to take care of Geraldine. "I love to play nurse," she said. "Mother was ill a long time and so I know just how, and since I am not to begin my classes until the spring examinations are over, I shall be glad to have something to do."

Madame Deriby granted the permission and for several days Geraldine's pillow was smoothed and her tray brought up by her kindly roommate.

One day Geraldine was able to sit up for a while and Matilda wrapped her in the warm plaid shawl and then sat in the sunny window to read to her. The story was interesting, but Geraldine was not listening. She was thinking of something that she had wanted to say to Matilda for the past week, but her pride had prevented. At last she

exclaimed, "Matilda, will you stop a moment if you have reached the end of a chapter? There is something that I want to say."

The other girl glanced up inquiringly.

"I want to ask your forgiveness for several things," the English girl began. "First of all, please don't move to the cupola, for I want you to be my roommate as long as I am in this school. I have always been lonely," she added, "and how I have wished that I had a sister or even a girl cousin, but I had none. Mother died when I was a baby and Dad tried to be mother and sister to me, but he had to be away so much, and I have lived nearly all of my life in French and English boarding-schools. We were poorer at first because Dad was only a younger brother, but last year his older brother died and left us the Barrington estate. I was so delighted because I thought that we would settle down in that beautiful place and have a home at last, but Father could not be happy, he said, until he had

found a sister of his who long ago came to America. If she was still living, he wanted to share his fortune with her. She had always been so loving to him, he told me, but she married some one beneath her and the older brother had disowned her. They knew that she came to the States with her husband, but she was never heard from again.

"We lived in our castle-like home for a month, then Dad packed up and said that he must come to America and try to find his lost sister. So we came. Dad put me in this boarding-school while he travels about looking for my aunt. He is away out in the Middle West now. In his last letter he wrote that this country is wonderful; he had never dreamed it was so big. He hasn't found a trace of his lost sister, however, and so he will be back in a fortnight, then, how happy I shall be, for we shall go back to that wonderful Barrington Manor, and yet, Starr, I feel sure that I am going to be lonely. There will just be Daddy and me in that great rambling old castle, that is no

one except the servants. I wish that I could take you back with me to be my adopted sister."

Matilda smiled into the beautiful face of her roommate as she replied, "I'm glad that you like me, Geraldine, but I love my prairie home as much as you do your English home and I couldn't let the ocean separate me from my splendid brothers."

"Well, then go on with the story," Geraldine said, and Matilda continued reading, feeling happier than she had since she came to Linden Hall Seminary.

Two weeks passed and Geraldine Barrington was able to walk about, but she was never content unless Matilda, whom she now called Starr, was her constant companion.

"Father is coming to-day," Geraldine announced happily one morning as she entered their room holding an open letter. "He is so disappointed! He writes that he has visited every part of the West, but he has been unable to find his sister. He will be

here this morning and I'm to ride down in the bus to meet him. I asked Madame Deriby if you might accompany me but she said that since you are just beginning your classes, she did not like to have you miss even one recitation, but I want you to get acquainted with him when we come back to the school."

"I would like to meet your father," Matilda replied. "I am ever so glad for your sake that he is coming." Then taking her books, she went to her classes.

At noon Geraldine danced into their room as she exclaimed, "Dad is here, Starr, and—oh, we've had so much to talk about. He and I are to have lunch together in the private dining-room and Madame Deriby said that right after that you may come and meet him."

When the hour arrived, Matilda followed Geraldine into the large parlor and a gentleman arose to greet them.

"Dad, this is Starr, my roommate!" Geraldine exclaimed happily, and Matilda found

it hard to realize that this was the haughty girl who had at first refused to speak to her.

"My daughter tells me that you live in the wonderful West," Mr. Barrington said kindly when the three were seated. "Dakota is the one State, however, that I did not visit on my quest. All that I could see was a vast prairie and I was sure that my sister, brought up with every luxury, would not be content to live there."

Matilda flashed a smile at the speaker. "Oh, Mr. Barrington," she exclaimed, "I love the prairie! I wouldn't exchange it for all the terraces and gardens of the world." Then, fearing that she had been rude, she added, "My mother was born in England and she has often told me about the wonderful lawns and gardens about the home of her childhood. She lived at a place called Ivondale."

"Ivondale!" the man repeated in amazement. "What was your mother's name, Matilda, before she was married?"

"It was Margaret Inslay. I was named after Father's mother."

The gentleman caught both of her hands in his and his face glowed with excitement. "Then your mother must have been my sister!" he declared. "Our name was Inslay at that time, but after we inherited our grandfather's estate, we used the name Inslay-Barrington."

The news spread through the school like wild-fire and Adele Doring drew Matilda into Apple-Blossom Alley as she exclaimed, "So you were a Cinderella all the time, you dear beautiful girl. I'm glad that I loved you in the very beginning, however, or you might think that I was hugging you now just because your ancestor's name was Inslay-Barrington, with a hyphen in it."

Starr laughed happily. "Adele," she whispered, "I would rather be the daughter of my own dear farmer daddy than a princess. Geraldine's father has gone to Dakota. He is so eager to see my wonderful brothers. I am hoping that you will meet

them some day, Della." Then she exclaimed joyously, "Do you suppose that sometime your mother would permit you to visit me?"

"I'm sure of it," Adele replied happily, "and I want you to visit me this summer before you return to the West."

The girls little dreamed of the delightful something that was to happen for all of them during the long vacation which was rapidly approaching.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE C. E. P.

“OH, girls, you never could guess what’s going to happen?” Adele Doring called as she whirled into the corner room where she found all of her friends from Sunnyside busy with their week’s mending.

“It must be something powerful exciting,” Rosamond Wright drawled as she dropped an ivory ball into the toe of her stocking, where a hole awaited darning.

“I know what I wish was going to happen,” little Betty Burd chimed in. “I wish Madame Deriby would say that we need not have final exams. It would be heaps pleasanter to be promoted without them.”

“Girls, do let Adele tell us about it,” Carol Lorens called. “I know by her shining eyes that it is something ever so nice.”

Adele sank down in the cushiony window-seat and looked around with a provokingly merry smile. She liked nothing better than to mystify her friends. "You may have three guesses," she said.

"Tell us what letter it begins with," Peggy Pierce suggested as she fitted a patch carefully on her laboratory apron where a hole had been burned during an experiment.

"Oh, um—let me see, it might begin with several letters," Adele said. "Well, I'll choose three, since there are three words in its name, and they are C. E. P."

"C stands for circus," chanted the irrepressible Betty Burd.

"Well, this C doesn't," Adele told her. "Starr looks as though she were about to see the light."

"Closing exercises are only two weeks away," that maiden replied as she sat thinking hard with threaded needle suspended in air. "Oh, I do believe that I have it! Might it not be a closing-exercise party?"

"Starr, you were well named! You are

brighter than the shiniest constellation in the heavens," Adele cried. "That's it! Madame Deriby just told me that she had decided that we might have a party the night before we depart for our homes. We may invite our brothers and that will provide us with escorts to check our baggage and all that sort of thing on the railroad journey."

"Oh, how nice!" Carol Lorens exclaimed. "I have so wanted you girls to meet my splendid brother Peter, and since Evelyn hasn't a brother, I'll share him with her."

"Of course they don't have to be brothers," Adele declared. "We may invite any boy friend, Madame Deriby said, that our mothers would permit us at home to have for escorts."

"No need to ask whom Adele will invite," Peggy Pierce sang out to tease, but Adele was not like Rosamond. She did not resent Peggy's nonsense.

"Of course you know," she replied frankly, which spoiled the fun of teasing her. "His initials are D. B."

"Would you leave your poor brother Jack out of the party?" Betty Burd inquired.

"No indeed!" Della replied as she glanced at the lassie next to her. "I was planning to ask Doris to invite Jack if she didn't mind, since she hasn't a brother of her own."

"I wonder who'll invite Bob!" Peggy began, but before she could say more, Bertha interrupted, "Why, I shall, of course, since he is my brother." So Peggy didn't have a chance to tease Rose that time.

One day soon after the party announcement, Adele stole into the library where several of her friends were doing reference work. She kept looking around as though she feared that she might be followed and her movements were so stealthy that the girls, who were supposed to be studying, were much mystified.

"Adele, you act like the villain in a moving-picture play creeping along that way," Betty Burd said. "It gives me the shudders. What are you afraid of?"

"I've a secret," Adele said, "and I don't want Gertrude to hear it. She doesn't know that I know. In fact, she doesn't know that anybody knows, but I do know, and ——"

"My dear Adele," Carol Lorens exclaimed, rising and pretending to feel her friend's pulse and forehead, "you don't think that you are ill or crazy or any little thing like that, do you?"

Adele laughed merrily. "No, I honestly don't believe that I am any crazier than usual, but truly, I have a secret to tell you, and I wanted to be sure that Gertrude wasn't in the room, that's why I stole in so still like. I thought that you were so engrossed in your studies, as Miss Sharpleigh says, that you would neither hear nor see."

"Gertrude is not with us," Evelyn declared, and then she added gaily, "If you really want to know where she is at this very moment, you have but to glance out of yonder window."

Adele looked and saw a tall lassie standing deep in the daisies with her flock of very

little girls trooping about her, their arms filled with the gold and white blossoms, but she also saw more than that.

"Look! Look, girls!" she cried excitedly. "What if it should be a budding romance?"

"Where? Where?" Rosamond called as she rushed to the window, followed by the others, who peered over toward the daisy meadow which bordered the school grounds on the highway.

They saw that a roadster had suddenly stopped, a good-looking lad had leaped out, and, with cap in hand, he was talking pleasantly to the youngest teacher. The little ones gathered close to her and listened with wide eyes. Then, with a merry laugh, the lad tossed the smallest high in the air, shook hands with Gertrude and was gone.

"Adele, I do believe that you are right," Doris Drexel declared. "I think that maybe it is the tiniest pink bud of a romance."

"Oh, girls," Rosamond Wright said, as they returned to the reference table and their

books, "wouldn't this be a fine title for a love story, 'The poor minister's daughter weds a millionaire'?"

"'Rosie the Romancer' would be an equally good one," Starr teased, "but, Adele, all of this time your secret has remained unrevealed. Of course we are brilliant enough to realize that it must be about Gertrude. Now, what about her?"

"Something ever so nice!" Adele replied. "The day of our C. E. P. is also Gertrude's sixteenth birthday. I just happened to remember it; now can't we have a surprise party for her inside of the big party for all of us, just like those Chinese boxes where there is one inside of the other?"

"Della, what fun that will be!" squealed Betty.

"Let's do it!" Peggy declared.

"Well then, thumbs up, and all promise absolute secrecy," Adele said.

"We promise," came in merry chorus.

"Sh-h! Here comes Gertrude!" some one whispered, and a moment later, when

that young lady entered the library, her friends, including Adele, seemed to be engrossed in their studies, and so she went away, little dreaming of the fun that they were planning.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

### A STRING OF PEARLS

THE next afternoon at the three-thirty recreation, the girls met in Adele's room to look over their party dresses and see if snaps and buttons needed sewing on or if ribbons and ruffles needed pressing. A pretty array of fluffy gowns, pink, blue and white, were spread out on their laps, and tongues flew as fast as the needles.

"Oh, won't we have the very best time?" Peggy Pierce was saying. "It will be the first real dancing-party I have ever attended. Of course we used to skip about to the tunes of the victrola at our home parties, but think of it, girls, at this dance there is to be a stringed orchestra from Buffalo and a caterer to serve the refreshments."

"I wonder where Bertha and Betty are!"

Adele had just said when the former maiden appeared with a letter in her hand.

"Girls!" Burdie exclaimed tragically. "The young man whom I invited can't come."

"Oh-h! Isn't that too bad?" Doris Drexel declared.

And Betty Burd chimed in with "It won't be a nice party at all if Bob Angel isn't here."

Then Peggy Pierce added to tease, "And some one was going to look so sweet in her fluffy pink dress. If Bob isn't here, our flower will wilt, I fear."

"Meaning, I suppose, a maiden named Rose," Doris Drexel chanted.

"Who said Bob wasn't coming?" Bertha flashed. She always defended Rosamond. "I'm sure I didn't! I changed my mind about asking my brother and I invited Dick Jensen instead. Bob wrote that he would be at the party if he had to walk here on jagged stones."

"A very devoted brother, I must say,"

Peggy said meaningly, with a sly side-glance at Rosamond, who was trying not to mind the teasing which Peggy seemed so to delight in.

"Adele," Starr said to change the subject and also because she had been wondering about it, "wouldn't it be nice if we all contributed toward a fund with which to buy Gertrude a birthday present?"

"Oh, yes," Carol exclaimed, "and let it be something that Trudie would just love to have but cannot afford to get for herself."

"I know what that something would be," Adele said brightly. "Last year Trudie told me that though she cared nothing for rings and gaudy jewelry, she would so like to have a string of pearls. Her Uncle Pier-  
son was visiting there at the time. He was in the room, absorbed in his reading, we sup-  
posed, but he must have overheard, for when he went away, he left an envelope addressed to Gertrude in which there was a message and a twenty-dollar bill crisp and new. In the little letter he told her that the money

was to be spent as she most desired. Of course he supposed that Trudie would buy a string of pearls.

"She was so happy and she asked me if I would go to Dorchester with her on a shopping expedition, and so, the very next day, we set out.

"When we reached a jeweler's shop, I expected Gertrude to turn in, but instead she went just beyond to a dry-goods store. I was indeed puzzled until Trudie, looking at me with happy eyes, exclaimed, 'Daddy and Mother have been invited to a convention in Boston where so many pleasant things are to happen, but Mummie said she couldn't go, and I know why she can't. It's because she hasn't had a new best dress in ten years. There are so many babies growing up, and each time Mother has a little money saved, it has to be spent for them, but *now*, she is going to have a new dress and go to that convention.'"

"Isn't that just like our Gertrude?" Doris Drexel said. "What did she buy?"

"She bought black broadcloth for a suit," Della told them, "and then, as there happened to be a sale, she also bought enough soft lilac silk for a dress to wear in the evening. I saw it after they had it made, and it was the sweetest thing with some old real lace in the neck and sleeves."

"Adele," Evelyn Dartmoor said, "I am glad that you told us about it. If you will appoint me treasurer of the fund, I will promise you that on her sixteenth birthday, Gertrude will receive the prettiest string of pearls that can be found in Buffalo."

"Good!" Della declared. "We will each give our contribution to Evelyn." Then she added, "I can't understand where Bettykins is. I told her that we were to meet here at this hour. I believe that I will go and hunt her up."

Adele did not have far to go, for she found the little one slowly ascending the wide front stairs and her eyes were red, as though she had been crying.

"What is it, Betty dear?" Adele inquired as she drew the little girl into an alcove. "Have you had news from home?"

"No, it isn't that, but I haven't a party dress, and so I won't be able to go to the dance." The tears started afresh, but Adele, with a merry little laugh, exclaimed cheerily, "Oh, is that all? Why, Betsy, that pink muslin dress of yours would make the sweetest party gown if you would let me change it a bit."

The little girl looked up eagerly. "Della, would you do it for me?" she asked. "I don't know how to do anything like that myself. I've never worn the pink dress because I just hated that high collar and the long tight sleeves."

"You'll be surprised when you see what a fine dressmaker I am," Adele replied gaily. "Don't say a word about it, and I'll fix it tonight when we are alone. I'll cut a square neck and short sleeves and put little lace ruffles around them, and oh, Bettykins, I've the dearest pink sash with long fringe that

has never been out of its box, and you shall wear that."

This was almost too much for the little girl and the tears appeared again, but this time they were happy ones.

"Della!" Betty cried impulsively. "That's why everybody loves you, because you're always doing things to make other people happy."

Just then the gong sounded through the corridors calling the girls to the Gym.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

### ROMANCING

THE week that followed was devoted to studying, for the terrible exams must be passed before the party could be enjoyed.

“Bring your books up to my room this evening at seven,” Adele sang out as the girls from Sunnyside were trooping in after a merry game on the tennis courts. “I’ll play teacher and give you a review.”

“We’ll be there!” Carol replied, then turning to the tall, quiet girl at her side, she added, “Evelyn, suppose we practise for the next half-hour since we are to perform at the closing exercises.”

Gertrude and Adele, arm linked in arm, entered the school and ascended the stairs to their room.

“Trudie,” Adele exclaimed as she sank down on a low stool to remove her tennis-

shoes, "what nice new friends we have made this year, Carol, Evelyn Dartmoor, and the lassie from the Dakota prairie. What a wonderful girl she is, that Starr! I am so glad that she came to our school. She makes me think of Eva Dearman a little. Not that they look alike. Maybe just because they both live in that glorious West. It seems as if I haven't heard from Eva in ages." Then folding her hands over her knees, she added thoughtfully, "Trudie, please don't think me sentimental or anything like that, but, when I grow up, if I should happen to get married, I do wish that it might be to an Arizona cattleman."

Gertrude laughed merrily as she began to brush her dark, wavy hair, then she exclaimed, "Donald Burnley is planning to live on his ranch, isn't he? Of course I mean when he finishes college and is ready to settle down."

"I believe that he is," Adele said, springing up, then she added with a smile, "Trudie, are you trying to tease me about

Donald the way Peggy delights in teasing Rose about Bob?"

"I feel sorry for Rosamond!" Gertrude replied. "Her mother is such a social butterfly and she seems to have no time for her pretty daughter, in fact she almost never writes to her. I sincerely hope that Rose and Bob will care for each other when they are grown."

"I wonder who Trudie's prince is going to be?" Adele said mischievously as she slipped on the simple muslin that she wore in the evening. "I'm going to guess that his initials will be A. E."

"Della, what a romancer you are to-day," Gertrude exclaimed.

Adele laughed gaily. "Hark!" she said. "I hear footsteps approaching down Apple-Blossom Alley." A second later there was a merry rapping on the door, and when it was opened, half a dozen maidens appeared and each one was waving a letter.

"We're the postman-brigade!" Peggy Pierce called. "Miss Sharpleigh has just

finished looking over the mail, and think of it, Della, there are six letters for you, and not one for any of the rest of us."

Adele's eyes were shining, for her quick glance had noted one of the postmarks. "Come in!" she called. "I am sure that there is interesting news in these letters that you will want to hear."

"Whom are they all from?" Betty Burd asked as the six girls sat tailor-wise on the floor.

Adele's eyes were glowing. She had peeped into the letter that was on top, and then springing up, she pirouetted around the room waving it in the air.

"Oh, something so very, very wonderful is going to happen!" she cried as she seized Gertrude and gave her a bear hug. "Trudie, here's a letter from the person we were just talking about, and it contains the best news. Who do you think is coming from Arizona to attend our C. E. P. and then is to stay with me in Sunnyside all this summer?"

"Oh, Della, is it Eva Dearman?" Peggy eagerly inquired.

Adele nodded happily. "Mother wrote to Mr. Dearman and asked if Eva might visit me during the vacation and I wrote begging her to try to get here in time for the party. She is coming next week with some friends of her Uncle Dick's who are traveling to Buffalo."

"Who is Eva Dearman?" Starr asked. "I know she must be nice, for you all seem to love her."

"Oh, indeed we do!" Doris Drexel replied. "She is a dear, beautiful, unselfish, sunshiny girl. She lives on an Arizona cattle ranch with her uncle Dick Dearman and an orphan friend, Amanda Brown, who married a cowboy named 'Rusty Pete.'"

"I wonder how Amanda is!" Betty Burd had just said, when Adele, who was reading the letter to herself, gave another wild whoop. "Oh! Oh!" she cried, "how I do wish that I was there to see it and hold it and hug it."

"Della, hold what?" Peggy Pierce inquired. "You are so provokingly mysterious."

"Girls," Adele said, "the most beautiful something has happened. Amanda Brown has a baby! A darling, little brown-eyed daughter, and Eva writes that poor Mandy, who so yearned for own folks two years ago, now has a heart brimming over with joy. Pete built an adobe house for her down near Silver Creek, only a stone's throw from the big ranch house, and since they have plenty of water, the porch is just covered with blossoming vines.

"Oh, how I would love to see that happy little mother sitting there crooning to her baby and watching for her cowboy husband as he rides home in the evening."

"Girls," Rosamond exclaimed joyfully, "this summer when we are all at home, let's each make something for Mandy's baby. Now, Della, whom is your next letter from?"

Adele glanced over the other letters that the postman-brigade had brought to her.

Then she gaily announced, "Here is one from Donald Burnley telling me that he will be glad to come to our party. Two of the others are from Daddy and Mummie with just love and home news in them. Oho! Here is one from Jack. It's such an unusual thing for my devoted brother to write me a letter all by himself that I am inclined to believe that something interesting must have happened. Perhaps he has passed his college preparatory exams, but that would be almost too much to expect from my indolent brother."

"Adele, it isn't a bit nice of you to talk that way about Jack," Doris Drexel protested. "It doesn't matter, of course, as far as we Sunnyside girls are concerned, since we grew up with him, but Starr and Carol and the others who don't know him might think that you meant it."

Adele laughingly hugged the girl next to her, and then turning to Starr she exclaimed, "Yonder on my dresser is Jack's photograph and if you care to glance in that

direction, you will behold a youth both handsome and indolent, who, nevertheless, is the nicest brother in all the world. There, Doris, is that better?"

"Not much," the other laughingly replied, "but since Jack is coming to the party, Carol and Starr will soon learn for themselves just how nice he is. Now, do read his letter to us."

Adele, who had glanced ahead, exclaimed gleefully, "Just as I thought, Jack did have something very unusual to write about or he would merely have added a postscript to Mummie's letter. It concerns every one of us, so harken and you shall hear:

"DEAR SIS AND ALL:

"A most remarkable thing has happened. I haven't been real sure whether I am afoot or horseback since I heard about it! Mother and Dad both say we can go, and the *we* means all the girls in the Sunnyside Club and all the Jolly Pirates. Now, if you are properly curious, I'll tell you where we are going. Uncle Jack and Aunt Dahlia are sailing for Europe this week and they have loaned us that wonderful island

of theirs in the St. Lawrence River for the summer. We will have a great old camping-party all through the month of August, that is, if you can find some older person to stay in the cabin with you girls. See you soon, and then you'll hear all about it.

“‘YOUR BUDDIE.’”

“Oh, Della, what fun that will be,” Doris Drexel exclaimed. “I simply adore camping.”

The other girls were equally overjoyed at the prospect, but a gong was calling them to various tasks and so they had to leave the choosing of a chaperone until another day.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

### OLD FRIENDS ARRIVE

"I've thought of the best person in all the world to have for chaperone for our camping-party, if she will accept," Adele exclaimed the next day as she skipped into the recreation hall where the girls were assembled, a shower having kept them indoors.

"Who is it?" Carol asked.

"It is Madge Petersen, a lovely young lady in Dorchester whom we once met at Little Bear Lake," Adele replied.

"Oh, how I do hope that Miss Petersen will go with us," Betty Burd exclaimed. "I heard Uncle George tell Mother once that Madge is his ideal of a gentlewoman."

Adele was chuckling at some pleasant memory. "What is it, Della?" Rose asked. "Tell us so that we may all laugh."

"Why, I was just thinking that Everett

Petersen ought to be appointed Sailor-in-chief. The very first time that I ever saw him, he had just tipped over in a sailboat on Little Bear Lake, and he came up looking like a drowned white rat."

"Suppose we invite Miss Petersen and her brother to our party!" Doris suggested, "and then we can tell her all about our summer plans, and ask her to accompany us."

This was done and two days later came the answer.

"They're coming!" Adele happily shouted as she skipped out to the tennis-court waving a letter. "Miss Petersen and Everett will arrive on the same train with Eva. So many pleasant things are happening, I can hardly keep my mind on my lessons."

"And those dreadful exams are to begin to-morrow," Rose moaned.

During the week of examinations, the girls tried to forget the party and all the joyful things that were about to happen. Luckily they had studied faithfully each day in the

year and so the testing time was successfully passed and at last there dawned the wonderful day on which their three dear friends were to arrive.

Arthur Ellsworth, who had met the Petersens in Dorchester, was to take Everett home with him while Madge and Eva were to remain over night at the school.

At last dawned the wonderful day when the girls had nothing to do but prepare for the closing-exercises party.

Gertrude, Adele, and Betty were a committee of three to go in the bus to the early morning train and meet their guests, Eva Dearman, Madge Petersen, and her brother Everett.

The day seemed to know that it was to be one of joyous festivities. Never had there been a bluer sky! The summer-house was covered with pink cluster roses, the garden was fragrant with bloom, and birds, everywhere, sang their most jubilant songs. In the distance, white sails gleamed on the shining waters of the lake.

The local train, which was usually an hour late between Buffalo and Linden, puffed noisily into the station, seemingly proud of the astonishing fact that it was on time to the minute, and when it stopped, the three girls gave a glad cry and leaped upon Eva Dearman, somewhat rumpling her tailory appearance, but little did the girl from the desert care; she was so glad to be with her beloved Adele once more.

Madge Petersen was greeted with equal warmth, though with more dignity, and Everett smilingly waited his turn, cap in hand.

"How our sailor boy has grown!" Adele exclaimed as they started toward the bus. "I do believe that he is taller now than Jack, and last year my brother was quite boastful of the fact that he was an inch nearer the sky than any of his comrades."

"Weeds grow rapidly," Everett told her as he assisted the girls into the bus and then leaped up as it started, riding for a moment on the steps.

"Yonder looks like a nice place to sail," he exclaimed. "I'm just wild to go somewhere this summer and sail from sun-up until dark."

"Oh, Everett, I'll be a good fairy and grant your wish!" Adele cried happily. "I have a wonderful plan to unfold." Then as they were slowly climbing the hill, Della told about her uncle's island on the St. Lawrence and ended by saying that the girls all wanted Madge Petersen to go with them and be their Lady of the Cabin.

"What bully fun that will be!" Everett declared, when Madge had smilingly told them that she would think it over.

"Adele, I invite you to go sailing with me the very first morning after our arrival," the lad added mischievously.

"You want to give me an early ducking, I see!" that maiden replied.

"Here we are!" Gertrude said as the bus arrived at the school and a flock of laughing girls trooped down the broad front steps to greet the newcomers.

Madame Deriby was pleased to meet these friends of the girls from Sunnyside and she told Adele that they might occupy the pretty room in the cupola for the night, and so thither they all flocked. When satchels, hats, and cloaks had been deposited therein, and Madge had paused a moment at the high window to admire the beautiful view, Adele and the other girls led their guests out into the garden, and there a joyous morning was passed gathering flowers and greenery which later they put into bowls and vases to be placed in every nook and corner.

When they all trooped down to the dining-room, the other pupils looked almost enviously at the laughing, merry group. They were unfolding their napkins when Adele suddenly exclaimed, "Girls! I never until this moment thought! What ever became of Everett?"

Betty Burd chuckled. "You all left him standing in the hall when you went up to the cupola room," she said, "and honestly, girls, I thought he looked scared, being the only

boy in the place, and so I went back to keep him company, but just then Arthur Ellsworth came bounding up the front steps. He explained that he had been delayed so he couldn't get to the station, and then away the two boys went, so you see, he is being well cared for."

"Jack and Bob are coming in on the next train," Doris Drexel said.

"Donald Burnley, Dick Jensen, and all the Jolly Pirates will also be arriving then," Adele remarked. "Arthur Ellsworth is to go over to the station in his tally-ho to meet them."

"What fun they will have," Betty Burd exclaimed, "blowing horns, like as not, all along the way."

"They couldn't have more fun than we're having," Adele said, when, dinner over, they were again in Apple-Blossom Alley planning to just rest during the afternoon.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

### THE CLOSING PARTY

AT seven o'clock that evening Apple-Blossom Alley was the scene of much merriment, for the dwellers therein, dressed in their prettiest with flushed cheeks and eyes glowing like stars, darted from one room to another.

"Oh, Rosie, come here a moment!" Adele called when that maiden appeared in the open door to announce that she was dressed and ready.

Rosamond accepted the invitation and Adele looked her over with a critical though admiring expression. "There is just one more touch needed; this lovely pink rose ought to be caught among your locks. Look, girls!" she added, turning to the others as she held a perfect flower among the short golden curls. "Isn't it just adorable there?"

"It is indeed!" came a merry and appreciative chorus. Rose was the most beautiful of the girls, but there was not a jealous heart among them.

"I'm sorry for Bobby-boy!" Peggy Pierce teased as she spread her pretty ruffled blue skirt, and perched on the arm of Carol's chair. "If he isn't in love now, he will be before midnight."

But Rose refused to be teased, and then there was a commotion out in the corridor.

"Oh, isn't she dazzling?" Betty Burd cried.

"Who, Who?" the others called gaily, and Starr was laughingly led into their midst. She had on a dress of soft creamy material through which ran a silvery thread and under the lights it glittered prettily, but it was the circlet about her dark hair that had attracted the girls, for poised in front was a silver star. It was Geraldine's present to her new cousin.

"Oh!" Adele exclaimed admiringly as she stood off and gazed at this girl whom she

had come to love so dearly. "You fairly scintillate! I wish your prairie brothers might see you now."

Starr laughed. "My doggie would never know me, I am sure of that!" she replied. "Just think, this is the very first party that I have ever attended."

Madge Petersen, sitting quietly on the window-seat, looked at one and another of the flushed faces as she thought that never before had she seen so many lovely and lovable girls.

Just then Marie, the maid, appeared in the doorway and announced, "The young gentlemen have arrived and are waiting in the library."

An hour later the long recreation-hall in Linden Seminary was the scene of a most festive occasion. All that morning the girls had been in the meadows and little wood gathering daisies, buttercups and ferns, and these seemed to be blossoming everywhere. In a palm-sheltered nook at one end of the hall, a group of Hawaiian musicians played

waltzes and one-steps that were sometimes dreamy and sometimes merry, for these dances were all that were permitted, and the happy lads and lassies glided about, smiling brightly when they passed the end of the hall farthest from the musicians, for there sat Madame Deriby looking wonderfully lovely in a silvery gray silk. At her side was Madge Petersen.

"These are all charming girls, Madame Deriby," Madge said. "I have been watching them for some time and not one have I seen whose manner toward her partner is other than frank friendliness."

"I am glad!" the pleased matron replied. "I have always tried to teach these dear pupils of mine that lads never really admire a girl who is simpering and sentimental. At first I feared that Gladys Merle Jones might be that type, but Adele Doring and her friends have done much to make Gladys like themselves."

At nine o'clock Adele, who was at that time dancing with her brother Jack, paused

and said softly, "Madame Deriby, is it time for the surprise?"

"Yes, dear," the matron replied. "Suppose you tell Arthur Ellsworth the part that he is to take, and bid the musicians play very softly."

When the first strains of the next dance were heard, Arthur went at once and bowed before Gertrude and together they sauntered out on the floor.

Trudie wondered why they seemed to be the only couple dancing, and she was still more puzzled when Arthur waltzed to the middle of the room and then paused. Before she had time to question this strange procedure, from every part of the room came laughing girls. Running toward her and catching hold of hands, they formed a circle about her as gaily they sang:

"Happy birthday to our Gertrude;  
May many others dawn as bright,  
And may you ever be as joyous,  
Dear friend, as you are to-night."

Then little Betty stepped forward holding

a long velvet box and curtsying to the surprised maiden she recited :

“We all of us love you, Gertrude,  
Sweetest and dearest of girls,  
And, that you may never forget us,  
Accept this string of friendship pearls.”

Sudden tears rushed to the eyes of the beautiful lassie, who was indeed dearly loved, but they were tears of gratitude and joy.

“But—I thought no one knew it was my birthday,” Trudie said when the pearls had been clasped about her neck, then she added happily, “I love you all, too, and I thank you !”

Gertrude thought her cup of happiness was brimming full, but another sweet joy was coming to her that night.



THEN LITTLE BETTY STEPPED FORWARD HOLDING A LONG VELVET BOX.  
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## CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

### A BUD OF A ROMANCE

ANOTHER hour of dancing passed and then Madame Deriby arose and nodded smilingly at Adele. This being a signal upon which they had agreed, all of the girls with their partners fell into line and marched joyously about the hall, then filed out of the wide doors and into the orchard. There a festive scene lay before them.

From the branches of the gnarled old trees many gaily colored Chinese lanterns hung, and underneath, small tables were scattered about with graceful Hawaiian waiters in attendance.

“I feel as though I had been suddenly transported to some magical far-away garden,” Adele said to Donald Burnley as they sat together at one of the small tables where were also Jack and Doris.

There were four seated at each table except at one, and there Gertrude Willis and Arthur Ellsworth sat alone. It was on the edge of the orchard, and Trudie, glancing up at the fleecy, slowly drifting clouds, saw emerging a slender crescent moon. From afar there wafted to them the sweet yet plaintive strains of "Drowsy Waters."

"It is a wonderfully lovely night, isn't it?" the girl said smiling frankly at the lad whose companionship she so enjoyed.

"Yes," he replied, and then, as though following aloud a former train of thought, he asked, "Gertrude, shall you go this summer with the camping-party?"

"Oh, no, Arthur, I am needed at home, and, moreover, I shall try to find some mother who would like me to teach her little ones during vacation. A minister's salary is not princely, you know," she told him brightly.

For a moment the lad was thoughtful. "Gertrude," he said at last, "we are young, I know, to speak of love, but if you think

that in time you could care for me, I would be very glad," then he hurriedly added, "I have spoken about it to my Aunt Louise and she said that she did wish that you would let her help you now, just as if you were really her niece, as I do hope that you will be some day."

For a moment there was a happy light in Gertrude's eyes, but when she replied, it was in the old frank way.

"Arthur," she said, "I like you better than any one else whom I know, and if you do care when we are older, I will gladly become your aunt's niece, but until then, I would rather not accept help."

And with that Arthur had to be content.

## CHAPTER THIRTY

### FAREWELL, LINDEN HALL

THE next day all was hustle and bustle at Linden Hall. Trunks were being packed and strapped, and Patrick, with Billie's help, was carting them down the back stairs and loading them on a truck.

"Girls!" Adele Doring exclaimed, as at last she stood with hat and coat on, "I feel like crying one moment, and then the very next, I want to skip and shout for joy. Of course I am sorry to leave Madame Deriby and all of our dear friends, but oh, I am so eager to see my adorable mother and my giant daddy that it seems as though I can't wait for the train to take me there. I almost wish Captain Nelson would appear and take us in his airplane."

"If you would like to see some one who

is radiantly happy, look at Starr!" Doris Drexel called, then she added, "I don't think it's a bit nice of her to be so glad to leave us."

Every one turned to look at the graceful, well-gowned girl who had suddenly appeared in the doorway, her eyes fairly glowing.

"I don't want to leave you!" Starr cried. "I want to take every one of you to my wonderful prairie home, and some day, you must come, all of you, and meet my splendid brothers, and see the cornfields and the sunsets. Promise me that you will."

"Indeed I will, if Mummie and fate will permit," Adele Doring declared. Then a gong in the corridor called them, and, bidding farewell to Apple-Blossom Alley, where they had had so many pleasant times, they trooped down to the lower hall where Madame Deriby and the other teachers stood. There were tears in the eyes of the matron, and yet she was smiling, as she said good-bye.

"I shall be lonely without my girls," she told them, "but most of you are to return in the fall."

Then Adele, who had been appointed spokesman, stepped forward. "Madame Deriby and all of our kind teachers," she said earnestly, "we wish to thank you for having made this winter one of the happiest and most profitable of our short lives. The girls have asked me to say that we love you and are grateful," she added simply.

Then Arthur Ellsworth appeared with the tally-ho. He had taken the boys to the station and returned for the girls. Patrick followed with another merry crowd in the school bus.

As they rolled down the deserted wooded hill-road, they sang a song which Adele had composed, "Farewell, Dear Linden Hall," and so sweet were their mingled voices that even the birds paused their caroling to listen.

Then, as they drew up to the station,

Adele called, "Sunnysiders, here endeth another chapter, and the next will be —"

"Adele Doring out camping!" Betty Burd finished for her.

**THE END**

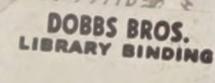






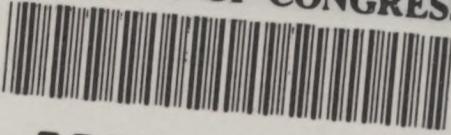






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